THE IRAQ WAR AND THE POST VIETNAM NARRATIVE:

CULTURE AND CHANGE IN THE U.S. ARMY, 2005-2007

by

WILLIAM BRENT CHASTAIN

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Student: William Brent Chastain

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This thesis has been accepted and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Science degree in the Department of Political Science by:

Gerald Berk	Chairman
Jane Cramer	Member
Alexander Dracobly	Member

and

Kimberly Andrews Espy	Vice President for Research & Innovation/Dean of the Graduate School

Original approval signatures are on file with the University of Oregon Graduate School.

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THESIS ABSTRACT

William Brent Chastain

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The Iraq War was an era of crisis and change within the U.S. Army. The failure of the army to adapt to the war revealed the obsolescence of post Vietnam army culture. Innovation experiences in the war were directionless and a new intellectual framework was required to deal with warfare that the army had long disliked: counterinsurgency. Major organizational change was accomplished by a coalition of generals led by Generals David Petraeus, Jack Keane, and Ray Odierno. These officers established a new intellectual framework with FM 3-24, *Counterinsurgency*. They challenged institutional military orthodoxy in Washington by proposing a renewed commitment to victory. Finally, they demonstrated the efficacy of counterinsurgency theory through a military campaign that "proved" FM 3-24. This major, yet limited, change in service culture fractured the consensus of the post Vietnam narrative and initiated an ongoing reinterpretation of the army's philosophy of war.

CURRICULUM VITAE

NAME OF AUTHOR: William Brent Chastain

GRADUATE AND UNDERGRADUATE SCHOOLS ATTENDED:

University of Oregon, Eugene
University of Georgia, Athens
The George Washington University, Washington, D.C.

DEGREES AWARDED:

Master of Science, Political Science, 2012, University of Oregon
Bachelor of Arts, Political Science, 2001, University of Georgia

AREAS OF SPECIAL INTEREST:

Military History

Organizational Theory

International Affairs

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE:

U.S. Army Officer, 2001 to the Present

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This work is dedicated to the troopers of the 3rd Squadron, 7th United States Cavalry we left behind in Operation Iraqi Freedom.

I will see you all at the Fiddler's Green. Garryowen!

Sergeant First Class Lonnie J. Parson	September 2, 2005
Corporal Luke C. Williams	September 5, 2005
First Lieutenant Kevin J. Smith	December 8, 2005
Staff Sergeant Curtis A. Mitchell	December 12, 2005
Sergeant Gene L. Lamie	July 6, 2007
Private First Class LeRon A. Wilson	July 6, 2007
Sergeant First Class Shawn M. Suzch	March 10, 2008

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CHAPTER I

THE U.S. ARMY IN IRAQ, 2005-2007

> It was like the debate of a group of savages as to how to extract a screw from a piece of wood. Accustomed only to nails, they had made one effort to pull out the screw by main force, and now that it had failed they were devising methods of obtaining more efficient pincers, of using levers and fulcrums so that more men could bring their strength to bear. They could hardly be blamed for not guessing that by rotating the screw it would come out after the exertion of far less effort; it would be a notion so different from anything they had ever encountered that they would have laughed at the man who suggested it.[1]

Essentially this is a narrative about change. The events in the Iraq War associated with the 2007 "Surge" of 30,000 additional U.S. troops and the adoption of a comprehensive counterinsurgency strategy under the leadership of General David Petraeus was a major transformational event for the U.S. Army. The relative success in 2007 of this shift in tactics and strategy[2] to rescue the overall U.S. war effort was an accomplishment that was widely believed to be impossible. In fact, an understanding of

[1] C.S. Forrester, *The General* (Charleston, South Carolina: The Nautical and Aviation Publishing Company of America, 2005), 195-196. A description of British WWI generals trying to devise ever more rigid command and control arrangements and using more and more firepower in larger assaults to break the stalemate on the Western Front in 1918.

[2] Throughout this work I will use the terms "tactics" and "strategy" often. However, I will not be using the strict U.S. military definition of the three levels of war (strategic, operational, tactical) as I believe that these rigid and somewhat artificial definitions obscure as much as they enlighten. The levels of war are a theoretical "levels of analysis" tool for understanding the different aspects of war. This tool artificially divides war into three categories, simply described as: 1. the strategic level- fighting wars, 2. the operational level- military campaigns (unified collections of battles), and 3. the tactical level- battles or engagements. However, this theoretical construct is often misunderstood as an objective reality and not an analytical tool. Therefore, when I use the term "tactical" I will generally mean the lower level of the army that actually engages in combat: the brigade-level and below. More specifically, when I refer to the tactical level of the army as an organization I mean all officers below general officer rank. When I use "strategic" it will refer to higher level grouping of tactics for military or political goals as well as to general officers as a group. I will infrequently use the term "operational" as a level of war, but I will refer to campaign planning and execution. It is not my intent to form any restrictive definitions of strategy and tactics as these concepts overlap and interact in significant ways that limit the utility of strict definitions. For more on this see Michael Handel's *Masters of War: Classical Strategic Thought*, 33-40, 353-360.

the preferences and values of the army would have predicted the inability of the U.S. Army to prevail in this inherently political counterinsurgency war.

Particularly since the end of the Vietnam War, the U.S. Army has been uncomfortable with ambiguous, limited wars. Army leaders in the post Vietnam era sought to refocus the service on straight-forward forms of war that conformed to the understood strength of American arms. The Second World War provided the paradigmatic "good" war in this conception as it was fought for clear objectives, the entire country was mobilized for the war effort, and it operated on an unlimited industrial scale of manpower, technology, and firepower. This idea became deeply ingrained in the army in the 1980s and was not even dislodged by the massive changes at the end of the Cold War. This cultural dynamic was clearly at work during the first years of the Iraq War in which the army was ill-prepared for the complicated requirements of an occupying army fighting multiple insurgencies.

In light of the cultural reluctance of the army to accept the requirements of a counterinsurgency war, how and why did the shift in U.S. approach in 2007 occur? Many different interpretations of the Iraq War are available with explanations for the relative success of the surge that vary in the extremes from solely crediting local Iraqi factors to solely crediting U.S. military action. What all of these explanations lack is an understanding of the organizational dynamics of the U.S. Army in this conflict. Innovation and "organizational learning" are often cited as explanations for the improved performance in the Iraq War. Conversely, arguments are made that President Bush or General Petraeus simply imposed a new strategy on the army and subsequently performance improved. Yet these explanations both ignore the facts that not all tactical

level units engaged in uniform or progressive adaptation and that a major operational shift is not achieved in a large and ponderous organization like the army by a senior leader simply throwing a switch.

In the Iraq War two distinct yet interrelated forms of organizational change were playing themselves out within the army. The first form of change was an internal debate about the specific requirements for tactical and strategic success in the Iraq War, while the second was a fundamental reinterpretation of the army's dominant philosophy of war. These changes were driven by a convergence and interaction of internal organizational dynamics. From the bottom-level of the army varying examples of innovation, adaptation, and retrenchment were exhibited by rank-and-file officers in the Iraq War. These attempts at innovation, both successful and unsuccessful were directionless and dissonance was experienced by these officers between the reality that they faced on the ground in Iraq and what the dominant military strategy required.

From the top level of the organization a coalition of like-minded generals formed and offered a new intellectual framework for conceptualizing the war predicated on achieving military victory rather than withdrawal. This new framework intentionally addressed the dissonance experienced by junior officers and provided a conceptual path to success in the war. Hence, the specific changes achieved by the army in 2007 were the result of an interaction between elements at the top and the bottom of the army and a convergence of factors external to the organization. This new framework challenged the organizational consensus that had formed in the post Vietnam era about the purpose of the army. While these developments in the Iraq War did not overturn the well-established dominant cultural narrative, they opened this dominant philosophy up to

reinterpretation. In a process that is much less decisive or clear-cut than the more narrow changes concerned with the specifics of the Iraq War, a long-term and highly ambiguous reinterpretation of the dominant cultural narrative was set in motion by the changes associated with the Surge.

It would have been an easy decision for the U.S. Army, in line with post-Vietnam thinking about politics and war, to have simply continued the established strategy in Iraq that would probably have led to the disintegration of the Iraqi state or an ongoing civil war. This strategic failure could have been easily blamed on the many failures of the Bush Administration regarding Iraq and allowed the U.S. Army to reject counterinsurgency missions in favor of more comfortable conventional ones. It is not difficult to imagine how this failure could have reinforced the ideas of the post Vietnam era and settled the question of the ability of the military to conduct messy political wars once and for all. However, this version of organizational path dependency or doctrinal stasis did not occur. In 2007 a strategic shift was made in the operations, and more importantly, in the thinking of the U.S. Army. While the "Surge myth" of the unilateral nature of U.S. success in Iraq in 2007 and 2008 is certainly overblown, so are the counter-claims that the Surge was merely a confluence of events or just luck.

This work seeks to explore the specific and general dynamics of organizational change in the U.S. Army during the Iraq War by understanding its organizational culture and how it changed during this crisis and over the longer-term. The first section begins with an analysis of the most prominent explanations of the Surge from the sizeable Iraq War literature. The next section details the historical and cultural context of the U.S. Army with an account of the formation of the dominant cultural narrative in the years

after the Vietnam War. Following this is an analysis of the convergence and interaction of the experiences of rank-and-file officers in the Iraq War with the activities of different groups of senior officers. In conclusion, the similarities and differences between the Iraq War and Vietnam War eras are discussed as well as the prospects for long-term institutional change in the army.

CHAPTER II

THE IRAQ WAR "SURGE"

"Iraq made fools out of just about everyone"[3]

A. The Surge Literature

The "Surge"[4] of U.S. military forces in 2007 is commonly understood to have "snatched victory from the jaws of defeat" in the Iraq War.[5] This conventional wisdom holds that success resulted from the combination of the political will of President George W. Bush, the military genius of General David Petraeus, and additional U.S. troops in Baghdad armed with better counterinsurgency tactics.[6] Alternate accounts of the dramatic decrease in violence focus on individual causal factors. Journalists Patrick Cockburn and Nir Rosen argue that the completion of the Shia ethnic cleansing of Baghdad, in effect a Shia victory in the sectarian civil war of 2006 and 2007, led to the decrease in violence. U.S. Army colonel Gian Gentile argues that the U.S. had been conducting counterinsurgency tactics well before 2007 and that the real cause of success was the

[3] Micheal J. Totten, *In the Wake of the Surge* (Portland, Oregon: Belmont Estate Books, 2011), 13.

[4] Henceforth, I will dispense with capitalizing, italicizing, or placing quotation marks around the term "surge." Whenever this term appears it refers to the 2007 deployment of approximately 30,000 additional troops to Iraq and General David Petraeus' assumption of command of Multi National Forces Iraq and all associated changes.

[5] Steven Metz, *Decisionmaking in Operation Iraqi Freedom: The Strategic Shift of 2007* (Carlisle Barracks PA: U.S. Army War College, 2010), 5.

[6] David Howell Petraeus, "Getting the Big Ideas Right: The Strategic Concepts That Helped Achieve Substantial Progress in Iraq" (Washington, DC: Heritage Foundation, 2008).; Raymond T. Odierno, "The Surge in Iraq: One Year Later" (Washington, DC: Heritage Foundation, 2008).; Metz.; and Yochi J. Dreazen, "Officer Questions Petraeus's Strategy: Iraq War Veteran Says Focus on Counterinsurgency Hinders Ability to Fight Conventional War," *Wall Street Journal* April 7, 2008 http://online.wsj.com/article/SB120753402909694027.html (accessed November 17, 2011).

hiring of hundreds of thousands of Sunni militiamen during the Sunni Awakening.[7] *Washington Post* reporter Bob Woodward asserts that the casualties caused by relentless targeting of mid and senior level Al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) leaders by U.S. special operations forces exhausted the Sunni insurgency.[8] Another explanation of the surge focuses on the "confluence" of multiple factors that led to success. Strategic analyst Steven Metz argues this position by describing the surge as a "perfect storm" of "good thinking, good luck, and good timing." This explanation describes Iraqi civilians tiring of sectarian strife, Iraqi Security Forces making limited improvements in performance, and U.S. forces practicing better counterinsurgency tactics as the main causes of reductions in violence.[9]

Other observers such as Bing West[10] and retired Australian army officer and counterinsurgency expert David Kilcullen, emphasize the importance of the "tribal revolt" in Anbar province against AQI as critical to the success of the surge.[11] Generals David Petraeus and Ray Odierno, the two officers most closely associated with the surge in Iraq, have not denied the confluence of factors, but highlight the importance of both "forces and ideas." They include the signal of commitment by the U.S., additional troops

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[7] Dreazen.; and Gian Gentile, "Misreading the Surge Threatens U.S. Conventional Capabilities." *World Politics Review* March 4, 2008 http://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/articles/1715/misreading-the-surge-threatens-u-s-armys-conventional-capabilities (accessed November 13, 2011).

[8] Bob Woodward, "Why Did Violence Plummet? It Wasn't Just the Surge." *Washington Post* September 8, 2008 http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/09/07/AR2008090701847.html (accessed November 10, 2011).

[9] Metz, iv.

[10] Francis J. West, *The Strongest Tribe: War, Politics, and the Endgame in Iraq* (New York: Random House, 2008).

[11] David Kilcullen, *The Accidental Guerrilla: Fighting Small Wars in the Midst of a Big One* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 115-185.

to secure the Baghdad area, creation of additional Iraqi forces, the Sunni Awakening, systematic counterinsurgency tactics, and the overall military commitment to secure the civilian population as the critical factors in the tactical and strategic success of the surge.[12] It is also significant to note that with the exception of the political memoirs of senior Bush administration officials,[13] not a single commentator argues that the surge achieved a strategic victory. Former *Washington Post* military affairs correspondent, Thomas E. Ricks stated that, "The surge campaign was effective in many ways, but the best grade it can be given is a solid incomplete. It succeeded tactically but fell short strategically."[14] Kilcullen declared that, "The Surge worked: but in the final analysis, it was an effort to save ourselves from the more desperate consequences of a situation we should never have gotten ourselves into."[15]

While there are many different interpretations of the U.S. surge of forces in the Iraq War, a "dominant debate" has more or less coalesced around two sets of general narratives of the war. Historian and retired army colonel Andrew Bacevich characterized the literature of the Iraq War as being divided into two general categories: "The first category, dominated by journalistic observers, indicts. The second category, authored by insider participants, acquits."[16] The literature on the surge has matured somewhat since

[12] Petraeus, "Getting the Big Ideas Right"; and Odierno.

[13] George W. Bush, *Decision Points* (New York: Crown Publishers, 2010).; Richard B. Cheney and Liz Cheney, *In My Time: A Personal and Political Memoir* (New York: Threshold Editions, 2011).; Donald Rumsfeld, *Known and Unknown: A Memoir* (New York: Sentinel, 2011).; and Condoleezza Rice, *No Higher Honor: A Memoir of My Years in Washington* (New York: Crown Publishers, 2011).

[14] Thomas E. Ricks, *The Gamble: General David Petraeus and the American Military Adventure in Iraq, 2006-2008* (New York: Penguin Press, 2009), 296.

[15]Kilcullen, 185.

Bacevich made this critique in 2007, but his description is useful in understanding the dominant debate on the surge and the reasons for its success. By broadening Bacevich's conception to include the broad strands of arguments running through the writings on the Iraq War a clearer picture of the surge begins to emerge. The first category of argument is best captured by Tom Ricks in *The Gamble: General Petraeus and the American Military Adventure in Iraq*. The second general category is captured by a combination of works by journalist Nir Rosen, strategic analyst Steven Metz, and Colonel Gian Gentile. The discussion of the dominant debate in the literature will be followed by an examination of the most unique and divergent explanations offered in other parts of the literature, concluding with general and specific gaps in the literature.

B. The Dominant Debate: "Confluence" vs. "Timing"

The dominant debate over the success of the surge in Iraq, 2007 is composed of a "confluence" argument and a "timing" argument. The "confluence" position maintains that U.S. political and military commitment to Iraq in manpower and resources, changes in military strategy, and a tactical commitment to population security all coincided with fortuitous events on the ground in Iraq leading to the drop in violence in Iraq in mid-2007. The "timing" argument holds that primarily developments on the ground in Iraq caused the decreased levels of violence associated with the surge. The completion of ethnic cleansing of mixed-sect Baghdad neighborhoods, the disintegration of Jaysh al-Mahdi and Muqtada al-Sadr's unilateral ceasefire with U.S. forces, and the tribal backlash against Al Qaeda in Iraq in Anbar province, all allowed the shift in U.S.

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[16] Andrew J. Bacevich, "Fault Lines: Inside Rumsfeld's Pentagon," *Boston Review* July 2008 http://bostonreview.net/BR33.4/bacevich.php (accessed November 19, 2011).

strategy and tactics to be effective. Simply stated, this is a debate about causality: the confluence advocates argue that the U.S. surge caused, or at least enabled, the decrease in violence while the timing advocates argue that developments on the ground allowed new U.S. efforts to reinforce the preexisting downward trend in violence.

Confluence

The most influential work of the surge literature is Tom Ricks' *The Gamble*. With his long experience observing and writing about the U.S. military for the *Washington Post* and the *Wall Street Journal*, Ricks had extensive access to senior political and military leaders in Washington, D.C. and Iraq, as well as a web of connections with junior army and marine officers in the field. This work best typifies the "confluence" argument: a combination of factors led to the success of the surge, but the most important factor was the introduction of additional U.S. troops, with new dynamic senior leadership and armed with comprehensive counterinsurgency tactics and hard-won combat experience. Since Ricks has essentially framed the conventional narrative of the surge, at least in the U.S., his argument deserves to be analyzed in detail.

Ricks identified five reasons for the success of the surge:

1. The forward presence of U.S. troops secured Iraqi population centers.
2. The completion of ethnic cleansing in Baghdad.
3. Muqtada al-Sadr's declared aceasefire with U.S. forces.
4. The "unity of effort" achieved by General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker's integrated political-military strategy with General Odierno's "coordinated and…synchronized" military campaign plan with counterinsurgency tactics.
5. The turning of parts of the Sunni insurgency associated with the Anbar Awakening movement.

The surge is described as a significant, yet narrow, military success. The surge managed to achieve a reduction in violence, but failed to settle the political situation in Iraq and guarantee a long term strategic victory for the United States. The success of the surge is generally credited to the U.S. military adopting population security tactics, having learned from four difficult years of war, the right leaders taking command in Iraq, and sufficient desperation taking hold within the Bush Administration to allow this new team to accomplish its mission free of interference.[17] The recent memoirs of President Bush, Vice President Cheney, and Secretary of State Rice all reinforce the general narrative that Ricks established, stressing the importance of General Petraeus and his new counterinsurgency doctrine, the importance of the Anbar Awakening, and emphasizing the space bought by the U.S. military for national political reconciliation in Iraq.[18]

Linda Robinson's *Tell Me How This Ends* and David Cloud and Greg Jaffe's *The Fourth Star* share Ricks' general "confluence" conception and put even more emphasis on the skill and genius of General David Petraeus as the critical ingredient in the success of the surge. Robinson stated that the combination of the efforts of 170,000 U.S. troops, Ambassador Crocker and thousands of diplomats, and hundreds of thousands of Iraqis, "pulled Iraq back from the brink of civil war," but she stipulated that, "without a doubt, Petraeus was the instrumental figure in obtaining the successes." Both works highlight the intellectual, leadership, and personality traits of General Petraeus that made him the ideal commander for the desperate straits the U.S. found itself in 2007.[19]

[17] Ricks, *The Gamble*, 9, 156, 160, 165, 173, 201, 203 223, 296.

[18] Bush, 365, 377, 385.; Cheney, 463.; and Rice, 592-593, 598.

A Brookings Institution report authored by Stephen Biddle, Michael O'Hanlon, and Kenneth Pollack offered a slightly different explanation of the surge, but one that was in general agreement with the Ricks narrative. Biddle et al., narrow the causal factors of the decreased violence to two: 1. the U.S. military's adoption of population security tactics, and 2. the addition of the surge army and marine forces into Baghdad and Anbar Province. These forces and tactics allowed Petraeus to take advantage of the "Sunni Realignment" in Anbar, to continue pressuring Jaysh al-Mahdi and other Shia extremist groups, and to "surge" Iraqi Security Forces in concert with U.S. forces.[20] In this conception, the U.S. surge of forces with new tactics, made all other political and military progress in Iraq possible; enabling the survival and spread of the Anbar Awakening to other parts of Iraq and breaking the grip of Shia militias on the Shia populace by removing their justification for existence.[21]

The primary U.S. military participants in the planning and execution of the surge, retired General Jack Keane, General David Petraeus, General Ray Odierno, and special political advisor Emma Sky,[22] all supported the confluence narrative in various articles, speeches, and interviews. Keane emphasized the combination of "classic

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[19] Linda Robinson, *Tell Me How This Ends: General David Petraeus and the Search for a Way Out of Iraq* (New York, NY: Public Affairs, 2008), 345-348.; and David Cloud and Greg Jaffe, *The Fourth Star: Four Generals and the Epic Struggle for the Future of the United States Army* (New York: Crown Publishing, 2009), 257, 260, 278 .

[20] Stephen Biddle, Michael O'Hanlon, and Kenneth M. Pollack. "The Evolution of Iraq Strategy" in *Restoring the Balance: A Middle East Strategy for the Next President*, ed. Richard N. Haas (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2008), 33. For an updated version of this argument see Stephen Biddle, Jeffrey A. Friedman and Jacob N. Shapiro's, "Testing the Surge: Why did Violence Decline in 2007?" http://www.princeton.edu/~jns/papers/BFS_2012_Testing_the_Surge.pdf (accessed May 11, 2012).

[21] Biddle, O'Hanlon, and Pollack, 31-32, 39-42.

[22] Emma Sky, a British Foreign Office official with extensive experience in the Middle East, served in the CPA in Kirkuk and later as General Odierno and General Petraeus' special political advisor for Iraq. Emma Sky, "Iraq 2007 - Moving Beyond Counter-Insurgency Doctrine" *RUSI Journal.* 153, no. 2 (2008), 31.

counterinsurgency tactics" to protect the population with Iraqi civilian exhaustion from the sectarian conflict as the key factors of success. Echoing Biddle et al., he argued that U.S. forces, tactics, and renewed commitment to Iraqi security made the Sons of Iraq movement and the Jaysh al-Mahdi ceasefire happen, and not the reverse.[23] General Petraeus emphasized that, "the most important surge in Iraq was not the surge of forces; rather it was the surge of ideas that guided the employment of our forces…"[24]

General Odierno reinforced this concept with his explanation of the surge as a coordinated, offensive military operation to provide real security to the people of Iraq by breaking the cycle of violence caused by inter-community sectarian violence. According to Odierno this new mindset was demonstrated through:

1. A full-time commitment to population security through dispersed U.S. combat outposts, checkpoints to stop death squads, and barriers to block car bombers.
2. An Iraqi government approved "balanced" targeting of both Sunni and Shia extremists.
3. A renewed partnership with the Iraqi Security Forces with more advising teams and direct partnering between U.S. and Iraqi tactical units.
4. A coordinated campaign to control the central districts of Baghdad and clear extremist support zones on the outskirts of the city.
5. Integration of political and military goals in planning and execution between U.S. military and civilian agencies with the government of Iraq.[25]

Finally, Emma Sky highlighted the importance of the pragmatic leadership of Generals Petraeus and Odierno. For the first time in the Iraq War the senior military commanders engaged in a comprehensive effort to truly understand the nature of the

[23] Matthew Kaminski,"Why the Surge Worked." *Wall Street Journal* September 20, 2008. http://online.wsj.com/article/SB122186492076758643.html (accessed October 20, 2011).

[24] Petraeus, "The Surge of Ideas," 2.

[25] Odierno, 3.

problem in Iraq, which by late 2006 had evolved from multiple insurgencies into large scale ethno-sectarian strife.[26] With a clear understanding of the problem, the U.S. was able to craft a coherent strategy, adopt appropriate tactics, and take advantage of Iraqi developments such as the Anbar Awakening and the fracturing of Jaysh al-Mahdi to foster political reconciliation. [27]

While the various sources cited in this section may disagree on the specific causes of the decrease in violence, or about the relative importance of certain factors, they all agree that a variety of factors were at play. The confluence argument is an essentially U.S. military-centric explanation that describes the surge as causing, enabling, and taking advantage of fortuitous developments on the ground in Iraq.[28] The core of this argument is that none of the 2007 reductions in violence in Iraq would have been possible without the leadership of General Petraeus, new population-centric counterinsurgency tactics, and the addition of approximately 30,000 U.S. troops. General Odierno summarized this position by stating,

> It's tempting for those of us personally connected to the events to exaggerate the efforts of the surge. By the same token, it's a gross oversimplification to say…that the positive trends we're observing have come about because we paid off the Sunni insurgents or because Muqtada al-Sadr simply decided to announce a ceasefire. These assertions ignore the key variable in the equation- the Coalition's change in strategy and our employment of the surge forces.[29]

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[26] Sky, "Iraq 2007-Moving Beyond Counter-insurgency Doctrine," 31.

[27] Ibid., 31-32.

[28] For a critique of this argument see Douglas A. Ollivant, "Countering the New Orthodoxy: Reinterpreting Counterinsurgency in Iraq" in National Security Studies Program Policy Paper (Washington DC: New America Foundation, 2011) http://newamerica.net/publications/policy/countering_the_new_orthodoxy (accessed April 29, 2012).

[29] Odierno, 3-4.

Timing

The opposing argument to the U.S. military-centric confluence school can best be described as concerned with the "timing" of developments on the ground in Iraq. In this view, the U.S. surge succeeded because of conditions and trends in Iraq that predated the early 2007 surge of U.S. forces. The three most prominent proponents of this position are strategic analyst Steven Metz, journalist and long-time Middle East observer Nir Rosen, and Iraq War veteran and current director of West Point's History Department, Colonel Gian Gentile. Factors such as the Sunni tribal backlash against Al Qaeda in Iraq, the splintering of the Shia militias, U.S. tactical improvements based on experience, and the hardening of sectarian boundaries as a result of civil war were all cited to explain the 2007 decrease in violence with U.S. forces playing only a minor role.

While Metz first used the term confluence to describe the array of factors that contributed the success of the surge, his monograph *Decision Making in Operation Iraqi Freedom: The Strategic Shift of 2007,* clearly argues that any "success" attributed to the surge was based on developments in the Iraqi political and security environment and not primarily from U.S. action. He acknowledged that the U.S. lacked a clear national strategy for Iraq and didn't have a comprehensive counterinsurgency campaign plan until 2004. However, by 2005 a strategy emerged based on Generals Abizaid and Casey's understanding of the growing insurgency. This plan to increase the size and capabilities of the Iraqi Security Forces and rapidly transfer security responsibility to Iraqis was based on the counterinsurgency principle that, "outsiders can influence" but only "locals can decide." Metz contended that this strategy was appropriate to the environment of

2005, but was clearly failing in 2006 because of the ethno-sectarian civil war that was occurring in concert with the anti-occupation insurgency.[30]

For Metz, "The popular perception…that the strategic shift of 2007…snatched victory from imminent defeat." is too simplistic to capture the complex reality of the situation in Iraq. This "surge myth" ignored that U.S. strategy in 2005 was wholly appropriate, that the situation fundamentally changed in 2006 with the sectarian civil war, and that, "The strategic shift of 2007 succeeded through a combination of good thinking, good luck, and good timing." Metz differs most significantly from Gentile and Rosen in his description of the role of key U.S. decision makers reacting to the security situation in Iraq. While they all agree on the importance of Iraqi factors in explaining the 2007 decrease in violence, Metz clearly sees the critical factor of the surge success as the key decision maker, President George Bush, taking decisive action to: 1. remove the root cause of general dissonance in U.S. Iraq strategy - Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld, 2. remove the principal advocate of a failing strategy - General George Casey, and 3. adopt a strategy and leadership that was appropriate to the current situation in Iraq - General Petraeus and his "counterinsurgency support plus peacekeeping."[31]

Timing is the critically important factor in the tactical success of the surge. The shift of 2007 could not have succeeded even a year earlier; it was an appropriate strategy for its time and place. Neither Sunni nor Shia communities would have tolerated the persistent presence of U.S. forces in their communities without the "exhausting" experience of the 2006 sectarian conflict. This exhaustion was particularly acute for the

[30] Metz, 3-4.

[31] Ibid., 5, 6,15-17, 41.

Sunni communities as they suffered at the hands of the U.S. military, Shia-dominated Iraqi Security Forces, Shia militias, and, finally, from their own erstwhile defenders - Al Qaeda in Iraq. This dynamic was described by Metz as the "perfect storm" of trends and conditions that enabled the U.S. to take advantage of: 1. changes in Sunni Arab attitudes, 2. experimental population security tactics pioneered by the U.S. Army and Marine Corps, and 3. the splintering of the Jaysh al-Mahdi and Muqtada al-Sadr's ceasefire. Just as the Sunni and Shia communities had to endure the crucible of the sectarian civil war to reach limited reconciliation, the U.S. military had to experience the full range of difficulties and failures of the Iraq War from 2004 until 2007 to become effective counterinsurgents. By virtue of its structure, training, and preference, the U.S. Army of 2005 was incapable of conducting the counterinsurgency campaign of 2007. Metz concluded that the current evidence of the Iraq War does not support the assertion that U.S. strategy was ineffective before 2007. The surge, "capitalized on a temporary and volatile combination of trends and conditions. It was the right approach at the right time."[32]

Nir Rosen and Gian Gentile offer reinforcing arguments for the decrease of violence in 2007. Both reject the idea that the surge was a successful U.S. military operation that "saved" Iraq; Rosen characterized it as "An Ugly Peace"[33] and Gentile as a "myth."[34] These authors come to similar conclusions from different perspectives and for

[32]Ibid., 39-42.

[33] Nir Rosen, "An Ugly Peace," *Boston Review* Novemeber 2009 http://bostonreview.net/BR34.6/rosen.php (accessed November 29, 2011).

[34] Gian Gentile, "Mired in 'Surge' Dogma." *New York Times* November 4, 2008 http://www.nytimes.com/2008/12/04/opinion/04iht-edgentile.1.18403949.html (accessed November 29, 2011).

vastly different reasons. Rosen, an Iranian-American and fluent Arabic speaker, witnessed the war in Iraq and the wider Middle East first-hand through his ability to blend in with the population.[35] Gentile witnessed the war as a combatant during 2006 as a tactical unit commander in the violent Baghdad neighborhood of Ameriya.[36]

Gentile took issue with the, "misleading current narrative [that] contends…the recent lowering of violence in Iraq is due to the American 'surge' and the application of so-called 'new' counterinsurgency methods."[37] He disputes the "surge mythology" that asserted: 1. that the U.S. fumbled around in Iraq for five years until it got its act together under General Petraeus and conducted counterinsurgency "right," 2. that U.S. units were "hunkered down" on large bases far removed from the population, and 3. that small combat outposts established in population centers reduced violence. Gentile argued that U.S. tactical units were primarily conducting population security missions as early as 2004 and the real cause of the reduced violence in Iraq was the "buying off [of] America's former Sunni insurgent enemies" in the Sons of Iraq program and Muqtada al-Sadr's ceasefire with the U.S. and the Government of Iraq.[38]

Rosen expanded on Gentile's basic point about the inherently Iraqi causes of the reduction in violence. He stated that the violence decreased because the ethno-sectarian civil war ended with the Shia proving victorious. This condition enabled all of the success associated with the surge. The Sunnis, as the war's "losers," were motivated to

[35] Nir Rosen, *Aftermath: Following the Bloodshed of America's Wars in the Muslim World* (New York: Nation Books, 2010).; and *In the Belly of the Green Bird: The Triumph of the Martyrs in Iraq* (New York: Free Press, 2006).

[36] Rosen, *Aftermath*, 329-334. And Ricks, *The Gamble*, 209, 217.

[37] Gentile, "Misreading the Surge," 2.

[38] Gentile, "Mired in 'Surge' Dogma" 1.

seek the best alliance possible to ensure their continued survival by turning on Al Qaeda in Iraq and striking a short-term tactical bargain with the United States military. Without a credible external communal threat, the Shia militias fell to in-fighting among themselves and preying on their own community through criminal activities. This criminalization, fracturing, and loss of legitimacy led Muqtada al-Sadr to declare a ceasefire and eventually depart Iraq in an attempt to disavow the most extreme elements of the Jaysh al-Mahdi and recast himself as a social movement leader. Echoing Metz, Rosen stated that, "Had the surge occurred a year earlier, it would have met far greater resistance." The success of the surge is mainly attributable to the following factors:

1. The civil war ended with Shias victorious and Baghdad largely "cleansed" of mixed-sect neighborhoods.
2. Sunnis, as the weakest sect, were willing to cooperate with the U.S.
3. Shia militias began in-fighting and turned to organized crime.
4. Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki attempted to make his government less sectarian.
5. The U.S. added 30,000 troops.
6. U.S. forces adopted effective counterinsurgency tactics. [39]

Metz, Gentile, and Rosen all prioritized the timing of the surge as the most important factor in decreasing violence in Iraq. While they did not dispute the presence of a confluence of factors, Iraqi conditions and trends enabled any success attributable to the surge. Whether the surge was an appropriate strategy adopted for a changed security environment, as Metz contended, or a result of the end of the Sunni-Shia civil war, as Gentile and Rosen argued, "timing" remained the critical factor.

[39] Rosen, "An Ugly Peace," 2, 11.

C. Specific Strands of Surge Arguments

The following paragraphs detail specific arguments that fall within the broad framework of the confluence versus timing debate, but represent areas of special emphasis within the literature. These include three strands of thought that could be categorized under the confluence heading: 1. tactical innovation, 2. operational art, and 3. problem framing. The sole timing argument, the surge as false victory, has the least in common with the dominant debate and will serve as our starting point.

False Victory

Benjamin Friedman, Harvey M. Sapolsky, and Christopher Preble's "Learning the Right Lessons From Iraq" is an argument against the entire question of the Iraq War posed by anti-war activists, international relations "realist" scholars, and libertarians, among others.[40] Friedman et al., argued against the conventional wisdom that the surge succeeded because of more troops, better U.S. interagency cooperation, and better counterinsurgency doctrine. They regard the entire Iraq War as a catastrophic strategic failure for the United States which highlights the need for a new U.S. national security strategy, not a better tactical or technical approach. Friedman and his co-authors reject what they saw as the root assumption of the entire surge debate - that Iraq was ever "ours" to transform - as inherently flawed; maintaining that democratization and nation building cannot be imposed by force of arms by outsiders. Military power may allow a

[40] For more in this vein see Barry R. Posen, "Exit Strategy: How to Disengage from Iraq in 18 Months," *Boston Review* January 2006.; Andrew J. Bacevich, *The Long War: A New History of U.S. National Security Policy Since World War II*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007).; and various other authors –Chomsky, Johnson, Klare, Bacevich, etc- at the American Empire Project website: http://www.americanempireproject.com

state to conquer another, but it does not give it the power to effectively administer the conquered.[41]

The invasion of Iraq exposed deep ethnic and sectarian cleavages within Iraqi society that no amount of military firepower or organizational skill could remedy. The real problem with U.S. counterinsurgency doctrine in general, and the surge debate in particular, is that it requires an outside military force to solve deep-seated political problems. The counterinsurgent is required to master the nuances of the target culture, avoid counterproductive violence, integrate government civilians and reconstruction into the military plan, train local forces well, pick local allies wisely, and protect civilians where they live. Failure in any one domain can mean failure for the entire venture; therefore, it is very hard for the counterinsurgent to win, and very hard for the insurgent to lose. According to Friedman et al., the real lesson of Iraq is that there are inherent limits to American military power and that counterinsurgency tactics by foreign militaries are bound to fail because of their complexity and ambiguity. The authors offered a core set of factors that cause the U.S. to consistently fail at counterinsurgency: 1. the U.S. is not an empire; the Department of State is not a colonial service and none of the organs of government are designed or intended to administer occupied, foreign territories, 2. the U.S. military has an ingrained dislike of counterinsurgency; this type of fighting is too political, low-tech, manpower intensive, and ambiguous for the U.S., 3. U.S. parochialism; the U.S. government and society lack the deep reservoirs of foreign language and cultural competencies required, and 4. small wars, like Iraq, are simply not in the vital national interests of the United States.

[41] Benjamin H.Friedman, Harvey M. Sapolsky, and Christopher A. Preble. *Learning the Right Lessons from Iraq*, (Washington, D.C.: Cato Institute, 2008), 2, 3, 8-11.

Tactical Innovation

James Russell did not offer an argument about the success of the surge in Iraq but provided a study of tactical level adaptation in combat. He took issue with an element of the popular press assertions that General Petraeus imposed counterinsurgency tactics on U.S. combat units and that improved tactical performance resulted from the 2006 publishing of the U.S. Army and U.S. Marine Corps' counterinsurgency manual. His case studies of three U.S. Army brigades and three U.S.M.C. battalions operating in Anbar and Ninewa provinces between 2005 and 2007 painted a much more complicated picture in which battlefield adaptation actually led larger level organizational innovation. Russell contended that the tactical innovation and success of U.S. units in Anbar province had a strategic impact on the course of the war. Tactical level momentum in Anbar was a result of small unit experimentation in a process of bottom-up innovation.[42]

Prior to the arrival of General Petraeus in 2007, no U.S. military or civilian leader had conducted a comprehensive examination of the U.S. approach to the war. Despite this lack of understanding and the strategic confusion in Washington, D.C., army and marine brigade and battalion commanders were able to engage in "an iterative process of organically generated tactical adaptation and innovation." Simply stated, a combination of desperation and a complete lack of higher headquarters restraints led to tactical innovation in combat. By historical comparison the Iraq War did not resemble the U.S. experience in Vietnam: there was no higher headquarters preferred "solution" in Iraq. The army actually embraced counterinsurgency competencies as official doctrine in 2006

[42] James A. Russell, *Innovation, Transformation, and War: Counterinsurgency Operations in Anbar and Ninewa, Iraq, 2005-2007* (Stanford, Calif: Stanford Security Studies, 2011) 2-3.

and its units "evolved" organically over time during multiple deployments. Russell argued that tactical practice in the field "pulled" the institution along behind it in a process that was:

> Dialectical in nature and drew upon a complex series of forces from both within and outside the units that fused together in ways to produce organically generated change-change that eventually 'pulled' tactical practice, institutional innovation, and (finally) authoritative doctrinal pronouncements along behind it.[43]

Conventional Operational Art

Kimberly Kagan's work may be situated squarely in the conventional confluence camp of Iraq War surge explanations, but her book, *The Surge: A Military History,* took a unique look at the surge as a comprehensive, and surprisingly conventional, military campaign. Her stated goal was to uncover an operational level of counterinsurgency in the Iraq War. As Kagan observed, "there is no shortage of compelling individual stories, but the glut of such stories often obfuscates more than it clarifies." Kagan argued that General Casey's attempts to secure Baghdad during 2006 actually served to intensify sectarian violence: 1. U.S. forces were pulled from other parts of Iraq to operate in Baghdad, leaving those locations "uncovered" to insurgents, 2. U.S. units focused mainly on Sunni districts, 3. too few U.S. forces were dedicated to holding neighborhoods once they were cleared, and 4. the Iraqi Security Forces were heavily infiltrated by Shia militias and sending Iraqi units into Sunni neighborhoods inserted Shia militias into those neighborhoods. The net result of this effort was the further alienation of the Sunni

[43] Ibid., 3, 7, 10, 13.

population from the U.S. military and Iraqi government and the spread sectarian violence into Sunni districts.[44]

According to Kagan, the real success of the surge was General Ray Odierno's series of four military offensives in 2007 and 2008 to break the cycle of violence and defeat the insurgencies. The "real" surge Kagan described, was the "first coordinated, offensive campaign against the insurgency in Iraq" which "took the initiative from the enemy at the operational, and strategic, level."[45] This campaign plan was based upon counterinsurgency principles, conventional campaign planning, and the first deep understanding of the strategies of Jaysh al-Mahdi and Al Qaeda in Iraq.[46] With the enemy strategies in mind, General Odierno planned offensives to: 1. clear and hold Baghdad, 2. clear the belts around Baghdad to protect the capital, and 3. pursue dislocated insurgents throughout central Iraq.

Kagan credited the new strategies of Generals Petraeus and Odierno and their opportunistic use of combat and non-combat operations with decreasing the levels of violence in 2007. In contrast to Rosen and Gentile, she saw the renewed offensives that attacked the insurgents' strategies as causing the spread of the Anbar Awakening throughout Iraq and the disintegration of Jaysh al-Mahdi. The real success of the surge

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[44] Kimberly Kagan, *The Surge: A Military History* (New York: Encounter Books, 2009), xii, xv, 18-21. The operational level of war is an intellectual construct that describes the conduct of a war at level below national strategy and above tactical combat. A conventional military understanding of operational art is campaigns waged in a geographic theater or by a corps or army sized unit.

[45] Ibid., 116.

[46] General Odierno determined that the ethno-sectarian civil war was far from over and that both groups were planning to continue the fight against the occupation and each other. Al Qaeda was positioned to attack Shia districts in Baghdad with car and suicide bombers from a Sunni support zone that ringed the Baghdad suburbs known as the belts. Jaysh al-Mahdi was determined to control Baghdad from inside-out by continuing to ethnically cleanse mixed areas of the city and push south to clear Sunni enclaves astride the pilgrimage route to Najaf and Karbala in the south.

was due to Petraeus and Odierno's use of military power to serve clear political objectives in breaking the cycle of communal violence in Iraq.[47]

Problem Framing

David Kilcullen characterized the surge as a tactical success within a strategic failure. The U.S. saved itself from a disaster of its own making and a situation that it should never have gotten itself into in Iraq. Kilcullen highlighted the U.S. military's lack of deep understanding of Iraqi societal dynamics until late 2006. Understanding the nature of the problem on its own terms and in its own context, the most important principle of counterinsurgency, was the single most important factor in the success of the surge. By 2006 General George Casey's strategy of transitioning security responsibilities to the Iraqi Security Forces was feeding the cycle of violence in Iraq. First, his strategy separated the U.S. troops from the population it was meant to secure and further alienated the Iraqi people from the American military. Second, by handing security for Sunni areas to the Iraqi Security Forces infiltrated by Shia militia, the U.S. perpetuated the cycle of sectarian violence. The turning point in Iraq occurred when U.S. forces began to understand the true nature of the problem in Iraq.[48]

Conceptually, Kilcullen described Iraq as a failing state with three distinct, yet interrelated conflicts ongoing: a terror campaign, an insurgency, and a communal conflict. U.S. action against the terror campaign - the most significant part of U.S. action until 2007 - had perverse and unintended consequences in the other domains. For

[47] Ibid., 203.

[48] David Kilcullen, *The Accidental Guerrilla: Fighting Small Wars in the Midst of a Big One*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009) 124, 126, 183, 185.

example, killing a Sunni terrorist leader might be a prudent counterterrorism measure for U.S. forces, but the terror leader's tribe would now be an implacable foe of the occupation and more likely to ally with foreign Al Qaeda elements to target Shia population centers for attack. Understanding this dynamic and that Iraqi civil society was essentially tribal in nature, were the key factors in U.S. success in reducing the violence in Iraq. Under General Petraeus, U.S. forces adopted population security tactics, co-opted reconcilable insurgents, expanded Iraqi politics to include Sunnis, marginalized extremists, and eliminated irreconcilable terrorists and insurgents. Without this fundamental understanding of Iraqi society and the nature of the problem, the U.S. would never have been able to take advantage of the Sunni Tribal Awakening that fractured the Sunni insurgent alliance with Al Qaeda. This fracture provided a tractable entry point for the U.S. to end the cycle of violence.[49]

D. Gaps in the Surge Literature

Dearth of Iraqi Sources

In the U.S. there is a distinct lack of mainstream Iraqi sources on the latter stages of the Iraq War. Scholar, Saddam-era exile, and former Iraqi Minister of Defense (2004) and Minister of Finance (2005), Dr. Ali A. Allawi, wrote one of the most prominent Iraqi accounts of the war up to late 2006.[50] However, there is not a comparable work by an Iraqi on the latter stages of the Iraq War. There are also a considerable number of Iraqi voices in blogs on the internet: two of the most famous are Salam Pax and Riverbend,

[49] Ibid., 149-150, 152.

[50] Ali A. Allawi, *The Occupation of Iraq: Winning the War, Losing the Peace* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2007).; For biographical details see: http://www.aliallawi.com/ and http://www.carnegiecouncil.org/people/data/ali_a__allawi.html .

with many more Iraqi and Western bloggers archived at Iraq Bloggers Central.[51] This seems to be an untapped resource for western scholars without Arabic language ability or the wherewithal to travel to Iraq to conduct research. It does however, have some serious limitations and drawbacks. The BBC reported that as of 2007 only 7.4 percent of Iraqi households owned personal computers.[52] Combine this statistic with the lack of reliable electricity and the limited number of fluent English-speaking Iraqis, and a picture begins to develop that Iraqi bloggers may be a highly educated, wealthy, and fairly secular group - perhaps also mainly Sunni - that does not necessarily represent mainstream Iraqi opinions or perspectives. Furthermore, with the sectarian violence of 2006, many educated Iraqis and prominent bloggers fled the country. That being said, blogs still provide a unique, if limited, resource for balancing the U.S. military-centrism existing in the dominant literature on the surge.

Classification

Since the Iraq War is an ongoing conflict, even with U.S. military withdrawal complete, there is a lack of archival data available for research. Many government and military documents remain classified and inaccessible for study. Due to the fact that U.S. military and government agencies in Iraq utilized a classified computer network for reports and day-to-day business, many mundane and non-sensitive documents remain classified merely because they were stored on classified computers or transmitted on a classified network. Unfortunately for the researcher, WikiLeaks is not the Vietnam War-era *Pentagon Papers*. WikiLeaks is mainly composed of raw, unit level reports. It lacks

[51] Iraqi Bloggers Central, http://jarrarsupariver.blogspot.com (accessed May 11, 2012).

[52]British Broadcasting Corporation, "Iraq: Key Facts and Figures," BBC World News http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-11095920 (accessed May 11, 2012).

the analysis and perspective provided by the *Pentagon Papers*, which were an internal Department of Defense review of the war, and not merely a collection of thousands of tactical "contact" reports.[53]

Finally, as alluded to by Bob Woodward and detailed by the BBC's Mark Urban, there is an entire element of the Iraq War that is shrouded in secrecy: the role of special operations forces.[54] Due to the highly secretive nature of U.S. and U.K. special missions in the Iraq War, the role of General Stanley McChrystal and the Joint Special Operations Command is poorly understood. Urban painted a picture of this aspect of the war that may prove more critical to the full story than the dominant narrative has accounted for. The Joint Special Operations Command was responsible for the death of Al Qaeda in Iraq leader Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, the disruption of Al Qaeda's middle leadership, the disruption of Jaysh al-Mahdi "Special Groups," the capture of Iranian agents in Iraq, and perhaps, as indicated by Urban, played a central role in the Anbar Awakening and reorienting the entire U.S. strategy of the surge. The prominence of General Graeme Lamb - as the commander of U.K. special operations forces and then as the deputy to Generals Casey and Petraeus - as the Coalition point-man on reconciliation with Sunni insurgents, indicates that the role of special mission units and their leadership is a ripe area for further study in the history of the Iraq War.[55]

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[53] West, 377.; and WikiLeaks, "Baghdad War Diary" http://wikileaks.org/irq (accessed May 11, 2012).

[54] Bob Woodward, "Why Did Violence Plummet? It Wasn't Just the Surge."; and Mark Urban, *Task Force Black: The Explosive True Story of the SAS and the Secret War in Iraq* (London: Little, Brown, 2010).

[55] Urban, 3-4, 91, 153, 176, 185-187, 189, 213, 218-219, 221, 267, 271.

Sequencing of Events

A major point of contention within the surge literature revolves around the causal relationship between trends in Iraq and the U.S. decision in late 2006 to shift strategy and deploy additional troops to Iraq. Did the surge cause the Sunni revolt against Al Qaeda, the splintering of the Jaysh al-Mahdi, and the end of the ethno-sectarian civil war? Or did it merely take advantage of, or coincide, with these trends that were already established? Understanding this dynamic is complicated and a definitive explanation might be impossible to achieve, but a clearer understanding of the sequencing events in late 2006 and early 2007 is needed within the surge literature.

It is clear that the Sunni revolt against Al Qaeda preceded the surge by many months, but there had been earlier indications of possible splits between Al Qaeda and tribal elements in Anbar. From 2004 until early 2006, there were multiple localized attempts by tribes and tribal confederations to seek alliances with U.S. forces and the Iraqi government against al Qaeda. However, these nascent tribal realignments were all eventually fruitless because of a combination of Al Qaeda assassination campaigns against their leaders, U.S. reluctance to commit military force to help these groups, and Iraqi government paranoia about supporting Sunni tribal militias in Anbar.[56] Multiple local security initiatives failed in Anbar because U.S. forces maintained the unreasonable standard, for Sunni Anbaris, that they must be posted away from their home villages to another area of Iraq if they were recruited into the ISF. It is obvious why a Sunni from Anbar would not be interested in serving in a Shia-dominated army or police force that

[56] William Doyle, *A Soldier's Dream: Captain Travis Patriquin and the Awakening of Iraq* (New York: New American Library, 2011) 109, 111, 112, 114.; and Biddle, Friedman and Shapiro, 11-14.

was infiltrated by Shia extremists. Naturally, the Shia-dominated central government, with its paranoia of a neo-Saddam counterrevolution by Sunnis, actively undermined Sunni inclusion in local security services in their home districts.

While it is clear that the Anbar tribal awakening against Al Qaeda was largely a local affair precipitated more by internal Sunni developments than U.S. actions, this movement was sustained by close coordination with U.S. forces throughout the province.[57] Furthermore, the Anbar Awakening and the Sons of Iraq program were related, but distinct, movements; the former was an indigenous political and military movement, assisted by the U.S. and isolated to Anbar province, while the latter was a U.S.-inspired and funded program that was instituted at the local level throughout Iraq and eventually included Shia groups. It is unlikely that the Anbar Awakening could have

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[57] Five unsuccessful Sunni tribal realignments preceded the Anbar Awakening:
1. Abu Nimr Tribe, 2004: This large Anbari tribe attempted to ally with U.S. against Al Qaeda, but there was little U.S. interest or action taken to support this initiative in the thinly held Anbar province. The U.S. demands that the Abu Nimr fight in the second Fallujah campaign and an AQI reprisal campaign caused this realignment to fall apart.
2. Hamza Brigade, Spring 2005: The Hamza Brigade was an anti-AQI alliance among the Abu Mahal tribe from Al Qaim, Abu Nimr remnants in Hit and U.S. Marine forces in the Euphrates River Valley. U.S. operations in the Al Qaim are weren't well coordinated with the Hamza Brigade and little overt U.S. military assistance was forthcoming to assist them. The brigade fell apart under the strain of an AQI reprisal campaign.
3. Desert Protectors, Fall 2005: Hamza Brigade remnants and other tribal groupings were organized by U.S. Special Forces to assist U.S. Marine Operation Steel Curtain to clear the Euphrates River Valley of AQI strongholds and seal the Syrian border. The Desert Protectors fought with U.S. units in limited numbers but eventually provided 1000 recruits to the Iraqi Army. The organization fell apart and most recruits resigned when the U.S. and the Iraqi government told the Desert Protectors that they would be posted to other parts of Anbar or Iraq for service and that they would not be allowed to serve as a home guard.
4. Anbar Peoples Council, Late 2005: Ramadi-based uprising against Al Qaeda to allow local Ramadi residents to vote in the second national election. The corresponding drop in violence was not reinforced and General Casey announced that he would de facto drawdown by two brigade combat teams by leaving the next two relief brigades in Kuwait as a reserve. An Al Qaeda reprisal campaign assassinated many of the leaders of the movement and a suicide bomb attack at a police recruiting drive killed 50 recruits and one American battalion commander. The U.S. unit in Ramadi at the time the 2nd Brigade of the 28th Infantry Division did not intervene against the Al Qaeda reprisals and the council quickly collapsed.
5. Anbar Revolutionaries, Early 2006: An anti-Al Qaeda alliance of Sunni nationalists and former Ba'athist intelligence officers engaged in limited cooperation and negotiations with U.S. and Iraqi officials, but negotiations collapsed because of refusal to allow Sunnis to serve in security services in their home areas. Biddle, Friedman and Shapiro, 11-14.; Michaels, 101-102.; and Doyle, 112-114.

survived, much less spread beyond the specific ethnic, political, military context of Anbar province, without U.S. military assistance. It is also clear that the Sons of Iraq movement would never have been established by the government of Nouri al-Maliki without the constant intercession of Generals Petraeus and Odierno and the efforts of U.S. tactical units to make the program a reality the government of Iraq had to grudgingly accept. What is unclear is the relative importance of the initial Sunni revolt in Ramadi in relation to the surge of U.S. forces and the Sons of Iraq program.[58] Was there a sequential ordering required for these developments? Did they merely coincide, or did one lead to another?

Nir Rosen asserted that Muqtada al-Sadr lost control of his militia, the Jaysh al-Mahdi, because of the Shia victory in the 2006 ethno-sectarian civil war. Without as many Sunnis to kill, the militia fragmented and turned to criminal activity and preyed upon the Shia community it had previously protected. This loss of control led Muqtada to declare a ceasefire and eventually travel to Iran to conduct religious studies.[59] However, Patrick Cockburn argued that Muqtada feared the surge of U.S. forces and the targeting of Jaysh al-Mahdi extremists by special forces and conventional units. al-Sadr believed that the U.S., Nouri al-Maliki's government, Sunni extremists, and other factions within the Shia community were all out to get him and that these factors combined with increased fragmentation and criminality within his organization led al-

[58] For various discussions of the Anbar Awakening and Sons of Iraq movement see David Kilcullen, *The Accidental Guerrilla*; Bing West, *The Strongest Tribe*; Nir Rosen, *Aftermath*; William Doyle, *A Soldier's Dream*; Tom Ricks, *The Gamble*, and Jim Michaels, *A Chance in Hell*.

[59] Rosen, "An Ugly Peace," 2.

Sadr to declare a ceasefire and eventually leave Iraq.[60] This issue relates directly to the final question of sequencing detailed below: did the Jaysh al-Mahdi simply implode because it "won" the civil war, or did the surge disrupt Jaysh al-Mahdi organizational coherence by separating Sunni from Shia with checkpoints, barriers, combat outposts, and targeting of mid and senior-level leadership?

The final issue of sequencing encompasses both of the previous questions within the whole of the Iraq War problem. Was the civil war simply over by late 2006 as Rosen, Gentile, and Friedman argue, or was the cycle of violence broken by the U.S. surge as Kilcullen, Kagan and others argue? It is clear that Al Qaeda in Iraq was in trouble by late 2006 in Anbar province because of the tribal alliance with U.S. Army and Marine forces, but, does this mean that it was on the defensive throughout Iraq as well? Kagan convincingly argues that it was not; Al Qaeda had a strategic stranglehold on Baghdad from its ring of support zones that surrounded the capital in the Baghdad "belts."[61] Was the situation in Anbar sufficient to weaken Al Qaeda throughout Iraq or was it more of a severe tactical defeat rather than a strategic one? The high tempo of sustained attacks that Al Qaeda was able to maintain in Baghdad after "losing" Anbar seems to indicate that the Anbar Awakening was a major, yet isolated, defeat that did not strategically cripple Al Qaeda's operations throughout Iraq.

The case of Jaysh al-Mahdi also offers some interesting avenues of investigation. If the Shia had in fact won the civil war it seems curious that its charismatic leader, Muqtada al-Sadr, would declare a ceasefire at his moment of ascendant victory and

[60] Patrick Cockburn, *Muqtada: Muqtada Al-Sadr, the Shia Revival, and the Struggle for Iraq*, (New York: Scribner, 2008) 189-194.

[61] Kagan, 15-18, 79, 197.

within months depart the country altogether. Even if al-Sadr's organization was fragmenting and criminalized, wouldn't it have been preferable for Muqtada to remain and lead a powerful fraction of the organization in victory? And if he had won the civil war, why leave the tottering government of Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki standing?

A brief examination of Baghdad sectarian demographics before and after the surge may provide a possible answer to these questions. Graphical analysis from a BBC report of Baghdad's sectarian demographics shows the divisions in Baghdad before and after 2006.[62] It is apparent that the civil war achieved a distinct "hardening" of sectarian divisions within the capital, with many mixed neighborhoods becoming either majority Shia or majority Sunni. The Sunni still held significant neighborhoods on the east side of the Tigris River and the Shia made significant inroads in western Baghdad – the traditional stronghold of Sunni Baghdadis. While it is clear that the Shia, with their numerical advantage and influence within the security forces, gained significantly in the sectarian conflict, but it was not a decisive victory. Rosen characterized this as the "ethnic cleansing" of Baghdad, but this precarious distribution of sects within Baghdad hardly indicates a strategic victory or a total loss for either side. Militias of both sects succeeded in clearing mixed-sect communities, but neither belligerent cleared the core of the other side's traditional strongholds.[63] Furthermore, Al Qaeda still maintained the ability to mount devastating car and suicide bomb attacks from the "belts" while Sunni militias still tenaciously held some eastern Baghdad neighborhoods. It is arguable that

[62] British Broadcasting Corporation, "Iraq: Four Years On – Baghdad: Mapping the Violence," BBC World News http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/shared/spl/hi/in_depth/baghdad_navigator (accessed May 11, 2012).

[63] For Sunnis, east Baghdad's Adhamiyah and west Baghdad's Mansour neighborhoods remained under their control. For Shia, Sadr City in the east (home to fully 10 percent of Iraq's national population) and Kadhimiyah in the west were under JAM control.

the civil war had simply reached a "tactical pause" in late 2006. This lull was an opportunity for each sect to regroup and rearm for even more devastating violence in 2007. This question seems to be at the heart of the debate between the two sides within the dominant narrative and deserves additional study and analysis.

Organizational Change in the U.S. Army

Beyond the question of the factors that caused the decrease in the levels of violence in 2007 Iraq, or the appropriateness of U.S. grand strategy, is the question often missed in the discussions of the surge. Arguments about the surge seem to focus on broad macro-level factors or deeply contextualized micro- factors. Missing from the surge literature is an analysis of the U.S. Army as a "whole" organization during the surge era of the Iraq War. While many authors do an outstanding job of capturing the high politics of the war, such as Ricks, Cloud and Jaffe, and Metz, while others, like Rosen, West, and Doyle provide contextualized individual narratives of small units and individuals, there is little written about how the army as an organization dealt with and adapted to the changes in the Iraq War.

James Russell makes significant progress in addressing this gap in the literature. His excellent work, *Innovation, Transformation, and War*, focused deeply on the bottom-up aspects of tactical unit innovation in combat. While his work was comprehensive and persuasive, by leaving out a clear narrative of how organizational change from the top-down and the bottom-up interacted, it provided an incomplete understanding of change in the army. Russell's case studies demonstrated that tactical units engaged in tremendous learning processes that resulted in innovation and experimentation that eventually

changed the army as an institution.[64] However, this is a limited and perhaps misleading characterization of a virtuous cycle of innovation. Perhaps the units that Russell studied all had particularly enlightened leadership, or perhaps they were so far from the higher headquarters in Baghdad that their units were free to experiment without interference; regardless, not all units in all parts of Iraq experienced this same virtuous cycle of innovation. There are numerous examples of army units facing difficult combat situations and failing to adapt as demonstrated by unit implosion, retrenchment in conservative doctrines, or by exhibiting increasing levels of violence toward civilians and insurgents alike.[65]

To address this gap in the literature, a study of the interaction of factors from the top-down and the bottom-up within the U.S. Army is required. The dominant narrative is not necessarily incorrect in its argument insofar as the surge, whatever its long term historical impact on U.S. grand strategy and the future of Iraq, was a major, traumatic event that required dramatic organizational change from the army as an institution. This seems fertile ground for investigation as Russell and other observers have indicated with their descriptions of the unprecedented "connectivity" that U.S. Army soldiers and units had both formally and informally between deployed and garrison units. These connections were forged through blog posts, private email correspondence, and use of private internet forums like the Small Wars Journal.[66] This "horizontal integration"

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[64] Russell.

[65] For examples of units collapsing under pressure see: Jim Frederick, *Black Hearts: One Platoon's Descent into Madness in Iraq's Triangle of Death*, (New York: Broadway Paperbacks, 2010).;Kelley Kennedy, *They Fought For Each Other: The Triumph and Tragedy of the Hardest Hit Unit in Iraq*, (New York: ST Martin's Press, 2010).; and Linda Robinson, *Tell Me How This Ends*, 185-216.

[66] Russell, 42.

among individuals seems particularly interesting when contrasted with nearly complete lack of "horizontal integration" between deployed and institutional army headquarters until 2007. As described by Ricks and others, the U.S. command in Iraq often operated in a vacuum of guidance from Washington, D.C. as senior military and political leaders acted as if there was not a major war going on in Iraq.[67]

Connecting the small unit and individual experience of the U.S. Army in Iraq with the political, bureaucratic, and strategic struggles in Washington, D.C. and Baghdad seems critical to understanding how and why the U.S. military was able to achieve an unlikely tactical success in a situation that was widely believed to be hopeless. The interaction of the tactical and the strategic, and the bottom-up and top-down, are all essential to understanding the organizational dynamics of the army in Iraq. How did the experience of individuals drive major changes in the institution while still being constrained by older philosophies? How were organizational leaders able to mobilize and deploy new interpretations of old events to deal with the challenge of Iraq? Were these changes in doctrine, structure, and practice merely instrumental or do they indicate long-term change for the army as an institution?

[67] Russell, 4-7, Ricks, *The Gamble*, 88-104, Woodward, *The War Within*, 129, 277.

CHAPTER III

THE POST VIETNAM NARRATIVE

> "I'll be damned if I permit the United States Army, its institutions, its doctrines, and its traditions to be destroyed just to win this lousy war."[68]

To appreciate the context of the internal army struggle over the conduct of the Iraq War, an understanding of the culture of the U.S. Army is required. The conventional definition of culture as "norms, values, and traditions…" is valid, but quite limited, in understanding the wartime army in the era of Iraq, 2005 to 2007. Borrowing a concept from sociology, it is useful to conceive of culture, not as a single variable or an unchanging, primordial phenomenon, but as an indivisible part of the organization.[69] Thus, organizations do not have a culture as much as they are a culture. The "lessons of history," or dominant narratives about past events, are powerful forces within an organizational culture, particularly the army's. The dominant interpretation of history informs the structure, doctrine, and operations of the service.

The immediate post Vietnam era was a very difficult time for the U.S. Army. It endured a bloody defeat in South Vietnam, it was buffeted by national strategic shifts under the Nixon Doctrine, and it found its very structure being dramatically altered with the end of the draft. Military defeat in a war that the army as an institution never fully

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[68] U.S. Army officer quoted in Vietnam. Roger J. Spiller, "In the Shadow of the Dragon: Doctrine and the U.S. Army After Vietnam," *RUSI Journal*, 142, no. 6 (1997): 42.

[69] For culture as a variable see Kier *Culture and Military Doctrine and* [69] Barry Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine: France, Britain, and Germany between the World Wars* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984), 221, For a discussion of culture as primordial see Ann Swidler."Culture in Action: Symbols and Strategies" *American Sociological Review*. 51, no. 273, (1986). For a discussion of culture as the root metaphor in organizational analysis see Gerald Driskill and Angela Laird Brenton. *Organizational Culture in Action: A Cultural Analysis Workbook*. (Sage Publications: Thousand Oaks, California, 2005), 29.

embraced, weighed heavily on the officer corps. In contrast to the experience of the Second World War, there was little post-war institutional evaluation of Vietnam. The army did not convene a board of high profile commanders to compile a set of authoritative lessons learned as it had after World War II. In fact, a comprehensive study wasn't undertaken until 1979 and then only by an external consulting agency.[70] Needless to say, the study was not influential when finally published. Of the major studies conducted by the army during and in the immediate aftermath of the war, only General Donn A. Starry's *Armored Combat in Vietnam* enjoyed any longevity or popularity. [71] This is due to the fact that the "lessons" of this work had less to do with Vietnam and more to do with the perceived efficacy of armored and mechanized combined arms tactics for the European battlefield. This is indicative of the narrative that developed in the post Vietnam army: the main lesson of the Vietnam War was that the army shouldn't fight wars like Vietnam.

This lesson was institutionalized in a variety of doctrinal and structural ways. In the mid 1970s the powerful commanding general of the U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC), General William DePuy, developed a new formal doctrine to shape force structure and combat capabilities with a singular focus on conventional warfare. In the late 1970s, Army War College instructor, Colonel Harry Summers, captured the post Vietnam zeitgeist with his influential study of the Vietnam War using "Clausewitzian" principles as his frame of analysis. Beyond influencing an entire

[70] Brian McAllister Linn, *The Echo of Battle: The Army's Way of War*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 2007), 192.

[71] For a list of U.S. Army studies developed during the Vietnam War and its immediate aftermath see: U.S. Army Center of Military History, "Vietnam Studies," U.S. Army, http://www.history.army.mil/html/bookshelves/collect/vn-studies.html (accessed May 14, 2012).

generation of officers with his argument that the U.S. lost in Vietnam because it had ignored the conventional nature of the war, he inspired the formulation of the Weinberger Doctrine. Where DePuy used formal tactical and operational doctrine to constrain what the army thought of as legitimate war, the Weinberger/Powell Doctrine[72] served as an informal strategic vision that hardened the post Vietnam narrative into a rigid orthodoxy. At the end of the Cold War, when the assumptions of this dominant narrative might have come into question, the First Gulf War - Operation Desert Storm - seemed to "prove" the validity of both the army's focus on high-intensity mechanized war and its narrow concept of the nature of war as defined by the Powell Doctrine. Both the restrictions of the Powell Doctrine on policy makers and the reluctance of senior military leaders to embrace "Operations Other Than War"[73] contributed to an intellectual drift over the purpose of the U.S. Army throughout the 1990's. The army leadership focused on force-restructuring and digitalization while still maintaining the assumptions of the post Vietnam narrative and its narrow focus on conventional war. This rigid orthodoxy made it almost impossible for the army leadership to effectively resist the powerful Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, who had an even greater faith in technology, firepower, and precision weapons than did the generals, but shared none of their reservations about using that force.[74]

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[72] Henceforth, simply the Powell Doctrine.

[73] OOTW in the army doctrinal lexicon or "small" wars.

[74] Andrew Bacevich, "Gulliver at Bay: The Paradox of the Imperial Presidency," in *Iraq and the Lessons of Vietnam Or, How Not to Learn from the Past*, ed. Lloyd C. Gardner and Marilyn B. Young (New York: The New Press, 2007), 131-134.; Conrad Crane, *Avoiding Vietnam: The U.S. Army's Response to Defeat in Southeast Asia*. (Carlisle, Pennsylvania: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, 2002), 4-15.; Richard Lock-Pullan, "An Inward Looking Time": The United States Army, 1973-1976" *Journal of Military History*. 67, no. 2 (2003): 491-494.; and Spiller, 41-54.

The post Vietnam narrative was established and maintained by a new conception of doctrine as a central organizational statement of philosophy, structure, and mission. It served as a rigid concept of what constituted legitimate missions for the military. Increasingly since the end of the First World War, but particularly in the post Vietnam era, formal doctrine[75] had risen to a position of unrivalled power within the organization and had largely determined procurement priorities, training standards, methods of operation, and created a specific vision of war for many members of the service. After Vietnam, army doctrine evolved into a concept that operated on three levels: 1. as a written, formal, and authoritative institutional guidebook for "war or non-war activities"[76] 2. as the common operational practice of the army or its "fighting doctrine",[77] and 3. as an informal or "assumed" doctrine which was composed of widely held organizational beliefs about the "essence" or purpose of the army.[78] As an organizational concept, doctrine became the clearest statement of the philosophy of the army.

[75] Formal Doctrine is composed of three types: 1. Capstone- FM 1, *The Army* and the more important FM 3-0 *Operations*, are the two highest class of doctrine which focus on the vision of the army and its mode of operation in war; 2. Keystone- written on focused elements of combat, such as Counterinsurgency, Stability Operations, Fire Support, etc; and 3. Supporting- most numerous and specific type, details tactics, techniques, and procedures for a variety of tasks. Kem, 48-49.

[76] Walter E. Kretchik, *U.S. Army Doctrine: From the American Revolution to the War on Terror*, (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2011), 5.

[77] Spiller, 41.

[78] Morton H. Halperin, Priscilla Clapp, and Arnold Kanter. *Bureaucratic Politics and Foreign Policy*. (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2006), 27. Examples of each aspect of doctrine: 1.formal- 1976 FM 101-5 *Operations*, widely known as "Active Defense," 1983 FM 101-5 *Operations*, known as "AirLand Battle," and 2001 FM 3-0 *Operations*, "Full Spectrum Operations;" 2. common practice- historical analysis of the Iraq War from 2004-2006 might show that despite the fact that Full Spectrum Operations gave parity to offensive and defensive combat and post combat stability and support operations, most units exhibited a distinct enthusiasm for offensive operations over stability operations; 3. informal- the Powell Doctrine was a belief about the types of legitimate wars for the army to fight and the assumptions of the Post Vietnam narrative in which feckless political leaders and a fickle public caused the army to lose a war strategically that it was winning tactically.

A. Formal Doctrine: Field Manual 100-5 *Operations*, 1976

Using the 1973 October War[79] as an inspiration and justification, General DePuy, the commanding general of the Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) elevated written formal doctrine to the dominant position within the army regarding training, force structure, officer education, and more subtly, with regard to the institutional philosophy of war.[80] DePuy believed in the overriding importance of training in his reform plan for the post Vietnam fighting army[81] and he initially concluded that the U.S. Army needed better training methods and standards, but not necessarily better doctrine.[82] The 1973 October War provided DePuy an unexpected opportunity to revolutionize the way in which the army trained, organized, and thought about war by inspiring the formulation of "Active Defense" doctrine in FM 100-5, *Operations*.

Using battlefield tours and after action reviews of Israeli commanders, DePuy ordered TRADOC to update army tactical doctrine in light of this new reality of modern

[79] The Yom Kippur War to Israelis and the Ramadan War to Arabs.

[80] In previous generations, doctrine had served as a secondary and often ignored element of the U.S. Army. Common practice of the field forces had generally dominated the army's inspiration for training and thinking about war.[80] In the post World War II era, with perhaps the seven years of Vietnam as an exception, the needs and practices of the U.S. Army field forces in Europe dominated training methods and evaluation standards throughout the army. The needs and practice of the U.S. Army in Europe were understandably narrow as they faced an overwhelming armored conventional threat across the European plain in the army of the Soviet Union. Kretchik, 6.; and Spiller, 41, 43.

[81] DePuy based this opinion on his World War II service as a battalion commander in the U.S. 90th Infantry Division. Over a period of six weeks during the Battle of Normandy, DePuy's division lost 100% of its soldiers and 150% of its officers as casualties. He witnessed the relief for incompetence, cowardice, and bad luck of two division commanders, multiple regimental commanders, and various other staff officers and commanders. Spiller, 44.

[82] DePuy's experience in Vietnam, in which he pioneered "search and destroy" tactics as the commanding general of the 1st Infantry Division, did not move him from his conclusions on training's ultimate importance. Lock-Pullan, 497.

war.[83] Just as the Russo-Japanese War provided a preview of the static trench warfare of World War I, DePuy believed that the October War provided a model of conventional conflict between NATO and the Soviet Union.[84] DePuy drew several conclusions from this war, based partly on analysis of the actual combat, but mostly on themes he had already been stressing about modern war. These conclusions informed his vision of war that, 1. combat would be short, violent, and destructive, 2. war would be "come-as-you-are," there would be no time for a mobilization phase, 3. war would be fought by relatively small, outnumbered U.S. forces, and 4. combat would be defensive, firepower-centric, and technology-intensive. This type of combat adhered to DePuy's own personal vision of war, and perhaps most importantly, it was untainted with any association with the war in Vietnam. The October War was a return to the type of conflict that DePuy and other conventional generals knew and understood well: total war in the model of the Second World War. [85]

DePuy's reorientation of the army back to conventional war was reactionary, but his method of achieving that shift was revolutionary. Doctrine in the history of the U.S. Army played a secondary or even tertiary role, in the life of the service. Doctrine was generally the codification of common practice. DePuy's revolution was achieved by creating a single manual that captured a very specific philosophy of war that drove the

[83] Saul Bronfeld, "Fighting Outnumbered: The Impact of the Yom Kippur War on the U.S. Army," *Journal of Military History.* 71, no. 2 (2007): 465.

[84] Linn, 203.

[85] The October War served as a mental model of an anti-Vietnam: it was quick, politically unambiguous, and decided by the clash of modern, mechanized main force armies and air forces. Spiller, 46.

development of all subordinate doctrinal publications, tactical training standards, force structure, and officer education. [86]

DePuy also established detailed and prescriptive training standards that reinforced the tenets of his Active Defense doctrine from the division to the squad level. TRADOC authors developed the Army Training Evaluation Program that provided a literal checklist for the evaluation of tactical units in accordance with FM 100-5. The ARTEP included every collective task that both combat and support units needed to accomplish in "modern war." The ARTEP system was augmented and reinforced by the Skill Qualification Test (SQT) which was an exhaustive list of individual tasks, organized by military occupational specialty, which every soldier had to accomplish to support the collective unit tasks of the ARTEP. These standards were then used by TRADOC's newly created Combat Training Centers (CTCs)[87] to evaluate tactical unit performance in large-scale maneuver training. The ARTEP and SQT system reinforced from the bottom-up in small unit training what DePuy's FM 100-5 manual enforced from the top-down through "capstone" doctrine.[88]

Doctrine also became far more influential in officer education and career advancement. Literal indoctrination became an overriding focus of army service schools

[86] The guerrilla and ranger tactics of the revolutionary war, "Indian fighting" from the founding of the republic to the end of the nineteenth century, the pacification of the Filipino Insurrection after the Spanish-American War, and the numerous interventions and "small wars" of the twentieth century all remained undocumented within army doctrine. Until Vietnam and later in the Iraq War, no official doctrine was ever written to capture the army's experience in unconventional roles. Max Boot, *The Savage Wars of Peace: Small Wars and the Rise of American Power* (New York: Basic Books, 2002) 283; and Kretchik.

[87] The National Training Center for mechanized desert warfare at Fort Irwin California, the Joint Readiness Training Center for infantry and special forces at Fort Polk, Louisiana, and the Combined Maneuver Training Center for NATO forces at Hoenfells, Germany.

[88] Lock-Pullan, 503.; Kretchik, 201; and Linn, 215-216.

like the Command and General Staff School and the War College. Additionally, training rotations at the training centers began to take on significant importance for officer career progression. The evaluations of officers in career-making command and staff positions were increasingly based on performance during large unit maneuvers at the National Training Center. Successful performance at these maneuvers was based on adherence to doctrinal tasks and missions as described in minute detail in ARTEPs and in more general terms in FM 100-5. Thus, for promotion and demonstration of professional skill, officers were incentivized to study and internalize the assumptions of army doctrine; success in service schools was determined by studying doctrine and success in the field was determined by the application of that doctrine. DePuy's formal doctrine was able to shape common practice in field or the army's "fighting doctrine" through training maneuvers at the National Training Center and other CTCs.[89]

Finally, DePuy's formal doctrine broke new institutional ground by driving the procurement of specific weapon systems and methods of tactical organization. Again using the October War as a model, DePuy's Active Defense doctrine required certain weapon capabilities that didn't exist in the army in 1976.[90] Furthermore, tactical formations were also greatly impacted by FM 100-5. Armor and mechanized infantry organizations became much more powerful communities within the army after Vietnam

[89] Spiller, 41-47.; Kretchik, 202.; and Linn, 211.

[90] The army's development of the M1 Main Battle Tank, the M2 Infantry Fighting Vehicle, the UH-60 utility helicopter, the AH-64 attack helicopter, and the Patriot Missile system were all driven by the need to meet the tactical requirements of DePuy's new high-firepower and high-technology vision of war. Once these massive procurement projects were undertaken, they developed constituencies inside and outside of the army that further ingrained DePuy's philosophy of war. Spiller, 47.; Lock-Pullan, 496-500.; and John L. Romjue, *The Army of Excellence: The Development of the 1980s Army*, (Fort Monroe, Va: Office of the Command Historian, U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command, 1997) 3-4.

because DePuy and his doctrine favored heavy mechanized forces over lighter forces, conventional over Special Forces,[91] and narrowly-focused specialists over general purpose troops.[92]

Active Defense was not universally accepted within the army upon its release in 1976 because it clashed with traditional elements of army culture. General Donn Starry made significant changes to the next version of FM 100-5 as the next commander of TRADOC. General Starry's new FM 100-5 became even more famous than DePuy's Active Defense doctrine under the name of "AirLand Battle." AirLand Battle rejected the most controversial aspects of Active Defense such as the focus on machines over individuals, defense over offense, and statistics over history. However, all of the critical assumptions of Active Defense remained in defining what was considered "real" war. While AirLand Battle might have focused more attention on leadership, morale, and offensive action than Active Defense did, DePuy's intellectual framework and narrow focus on European land war survived intact.[93]

General DePuy used FM 100-5 as capstone doctrine combined with other elements of TRADOC's structural power to institutionalize a rigid, tactically-focused vision of modern war that ingrained powerful assumptions within army culture. Active Defense was essentially a rejection of the ambiguous, limited wars of not just Vietnam,

[91] Similar to the army shedding the vocal and troublesome air arm in 1947 with the creation of the U.S.AF, the 1987 Goldwater-Nichols creation of the independent Special Operations Command essentially created a separate service for SF and freed the conventional army of another troublesome minority that did not mesh well with the "big" war mindset. Kretchik, 186.; and Linn, 215.

[92] This is clearly demonstrated by the near abandonment of helicopter-borne air mobility units and tactics that were widely used in the previous conflict: demonstrating another overt rejection of the experience of Vietnam. Romjue, *The Army of Excellence: The Development of the 1980s Army*, 135-202.

[93] Linn, 210.; Crane, *Avoiding Vietnam*, 12.; Kretchik, 195.; Spiller, 44.; Lock-Pullan, 446.; and Bronfeld, 171.

but of the entire post World War II era. DePuy's real revolution, not a specific tactical formulation but the elevation of doctrine to a central position within the organization, was never circumscribed, in fact it was enhanced with subsequent capstone manuals. By narrowly defining legitimate or "real" war as high-intensity, state-on-state war, and training and equipping solely for that definition of war, the army was setting itself up to be ill-prepared, both intellectually and materially, for conflicts that fell outside the range of that limited definition. The army became in effect, educated, organized, armed, and trained to operate in one small domain of war. Anything falling outside of that domain was considered to be illegitimate, a distraction from the organizational purpose, or simply wrong.

B. Informal Doctrine: The Powell Doctrine

In 1981 Colonel Harry Summers, a veteran of Korea and Vietnam and an instructor at the U.S. Army War College, captured and catalyzed the post Vietnam War intellectual zeitgeist of the officer corps in his book, *On Strategy: The Vietnam War in Context*. Colonel Summers used Clausewitzian principles of war to examine the U.S. defeat in Southeast Asia. Summers argued that the conventional wisdom regarding the Vietnam War was wrong: the U.S. did not in fact lose an irregular counterinsurgency war in South Vietnam over the hearts and minds of the people, it lost a conventional war against the main force army of North Vietnam. The U.S. defeat was attributed to failure to identify the true center of gravity of the Vietnam War as not in the south, but residing within the North Vietnamese state. The U.S. lost in Vietnam because it was not conventional enough in prosecuting the war against the true enemy: North Vietnam. While many have subsequently questioned Summers' analysis, in particular his

assumptions regarding likely North Vietnamese responses to the strategic approach outlined in his book, this work was widely heralded by senior army leaders, and adopted as the service's authoritative account for the U.S. defeat in Vietnam.[94]

Summers' conclusions were very appealing to many military officers; they supported the emerging army consensus on the lessons of the war. In his 1987 PhD dissertation, *The American Military and the Lessons of Vietnam*, then Major David Petraeus outlined the institutional lessons learned in Vietnam as: 1. public support for protracted war is very short-lived and unstable, 2. military force lacks utility in non-military - as in political - matters, 3. civilian political leaders are unreliable in time of war, and, 4.that an "all-or-nothing" approach to war is preferred. Petraeus characterized Summers' argument as a conservative reaction to the trauma of Vietnam that sought to shift blame for defeat from the military to, "timid politicians, civilian counterinsurgency experts, [and] the public."[95]

General Colin Powell's personal lessons drawn from Vietnam, also framed in the language of Clausewitz, corresponded closely with Summers' narrative.[96] The Powell Doctrine began its existence as the Weinberger Doctrine in 1984 while Powell served as

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[94] Crane, *Avoiding Vietnam*, 7-10.; Harry G. Summers, Jr., *On Strategy: A Critical analysis of the Vietnam War*, (New York: The Presidio Press, 1995), xii, xiii.; and Wray R. Johnson, "War, Culture, and the Interpretation of History: The Vietnam War Reconsidered," *Small Wars & Insurgencies.* 9, no. 2 (1998): 102-106.

[95] David H. Petraeus, "The American Military and the Lessons of Vietnam: A Study of Military influence and the Use of Force in the Post-Vietnam Era," (PhD diss., Princeton University, 1987),104, 128-129, 133, 136.

[96] Implicit within Powell's analysis of the U.S. defeat in Vietnam were three ideas that became the foundation of the Weinberger/Powell Doctrine: 1. senior civilian leaders failed to set a strategic goal for the war, 2. the U.S. public failed to support the war, and 3. the military performed well tactically but, the lack of political will and popular support resulted in defeat. Colin L. Powell, My American Journey, (New York: Ballantine Books, 1996), 207-208.

Secretary of Defense Weinberger's military assistant. The Weinberger Doctrine was initially devised as a statement of the post Vietnam consensus within the Department of Defense and as a reaction against ambiguous "presence" missions and other military interventions favored by Secretary of State George Schultz and others within the Reagan Administration.[97] In his autobiography, Powell heartily approved of this doctrine by stating, "Clausewitz would have applauded." He stated that he used this as a "practical guide" in advising presidents and his only concern was that the list was stated too explicitly in public and that enemies might attempt to find "loopholes."[98]

The Powell Doctrine neatly captured the post Vietnam narrative and reinforced the narrow definition of legitimate war as established by the formal doctrine of General DePuy's FM 100-5, *Operations*. If all seven tests of the Powell Doctrine were applied, the use of military force would be all but precluded except in the case of a conventional, high-intensity war against another state. This was precisely the type of war that the U.S. Army wanted to fight in the aftermath of the defeat in Vietnam. With the combination of DePuy's new conception of formal doctrine and the informal doctrine of Colin Powell, the post Vietnam narrative within the U.S. Army hardened into a rigid institutional orthodoxy with long term consequences for how the army perceived its security environment and prepared for war. The Powell Doctrine also implanted the army's post Vietnam narrative assumptions firmly within the national strategic consciousness,

[97] Weinberger delivered his six tests for the commitment of the U.S. military at a speech before the National Press Club on November 29, 1984: 1. "Commit only if our or our allies' vital interests are stake."; 2. "If we commit do so with all resources necessary to win."; 3. "Go in only with clear political and military objectives."; 4. "Be ready to change the commitment if the objectives change."; 5. "Only take on commitments that can gain the support of the American people and Congress."; 6. "Commit U.S. forces only as a last resort." Powell, *My American Journey*, 303.

[98] Ibid.

establishing a permissive political environment for the army's vision of itself and its conception of "modern" war.

C. Common Practice: Operation Desert Storm and the Post Cold War Era

Despite the monumental changes in the international system during the early 1990s, the lopsided U.S.-led victory over Saddam Hussein in the 1991 Gulf War introduced a condition of doctrinal stasis in the U.S. Army. Without Operation Desert Storm and its conventionally understood lessons, the U.S. Army might have been forced to reexamine the core assumptions of the post Vietnam narrative. However, the Gulf War provided a useful, and apparently conclusive, argument about the future of modern war. Rather than relying on the proxy experience of the October War, the army now had its own short, violent, firepower-intensive, high-technology, and politically unambiguous "big" war. For the leadership of the U.S. Army, particularly Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Colin Powell, the Gulf War validated the narrow prescriptions for the use of force prescribed by the Powell Doctrine. Challenging the received institutional wisdom of the Gulf War was viewed as tantamount to disloyalty within the officer corps as this conflict was seen as redeeming the army from its defeat in Vietnam.[99]

After the Gulf War, Colin Powell added a seventh test, the use of overwhelming force, to the doctrine that bore his name. In a 1992 article in *Foreign Affairs* Colin Powell outlined his vision for future U.S. military strategy. He summarized a position in which most of the core assumptions of the post Vietnam era were confirmed. He shifted focus from global war to regional war, but the examples used were conventional, high-

[99] Spiller, 42.

intensity conflicts such as Operation Desert Storm and a potential conflict with North Korea. New missions like peacekeeping and humanitarian assistance were mentioned, but the main focus was still on major war. Powell's argument in *Foreign Affairs* summarized the institutional army's reaction to the end of the Cold War.[100] Despite the dissolution of the Soviet threat, force reductions, and the expansion of "Operations Other Than War" the army made only minor adjustments from the 1980s. Strategic reality forced the army to at least acknowledge the end of the Cold War, but it is clear that the interventions of the 1990s were viewed as a distraction from the army's primary mission of preparing for major, conventional war against another state.[101]

The Powell Doctrine animated the entire conduct of the Gulf War and all of its tests were satisfied in one way or another: overwhelming force was used and the war was terminated at the point where its most basic objectives had been met. There was no real modification of the war aims during the campaign and significant levels of public support for the war were maintained throughout. It is ironic that the overwhelming military victory that Powell had helped to engineer began a steady unraveling of his doctrine, particularly during the Clinton administration. The now famous exchange between Powell and Madeline Albright clearly illustrates this process:

> My constant, unwelcome message [to the Clinton administration] at all of the meetings on Bosnia was simply that we should not commit military forces until we had a clear political objective…Madeline Albright…asked me in frustration,

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[100] Colin L. Powell,"U.S. Forces: Challenges Ahead". *Foreign Affairs.* 71, no. 5 (1992), 33.

[101] Kretchik, 224, 226.; Definition of small wars: "small wars are campaigns undertaken under executive authority, wherein military force is combined with diplomatic pressure in the internal or external affairs of another state whose government is unstable, inadequate, or unsatisfactory for the preservation of life and such interests as are determined by the foreign policy of our Nation…assistance rendered…may vary from a peaceful act…to the establishment of a complete military government supported by an active combat force. United States Marine Corps, *Small Wars Manual*, (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1997), 1.; and Boot, xv.

> "What's the point of having this superb military that you're always talking about if we can't use it?" I thought I would have an aneurysm.[102]

The restrictive nature of the Powell Doctrine did not long survive General Powell's retirement in 1995 as it was almost immediately followed by the deployment of U.S. forces to long-term peacekeeping duties in the Balkans.[103]

Despite civilian leaders rejecting the Powell Doctrine in practice, if not in public statements, the senior leadership of the army still hewed closely to its vision of "real" war. Army leaders focused on relatively minor organizational changes during this period such as Force XXI, the Army after Next, transformation, and the Revolution in Military Affairs.[104] These initiatives only dealt tangentially with the requirements of the missions of the post Cold War world and were focused primarily on high-intensity war[105] In an effort to bring the military's overwhelming conventional advantage to bear on every type of operation, the army treated the operations in Somalia, Haiti, Bosnia, Kosovo and Iraq, as conventional battles regardless of the specific mission or circumstances. As General John Galvin commented in 1986, there is a, "propensity for the U.S. military to 'invent' a 'comfortable' vision of war." The post Vietnam narrative was only slightly modified in the 1990s, with all of its critical assumptions intact, and a vision of war developed for a

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[102] Powell, *My American Journey*, 576.

[103] Crane, *Avoiding Vietnam*, 15.

[104] Inspired by the Gulf War: the use of precision weapons, and new digital communication, computers, and geo-location technology to bring war into the information age, Linn, 221.

[105] The development in the early 2000s of medium weight brigades using Stryker vehicles and the shift from the division to the brigade as the decisive tactical unit were also similar incremental organizational changes that did not address any deep reflection on the purpose of the army. The Stryker and the Brigade-centric redesign could be argued as efforts to deal with the post Cold War world, but mainly in the areas of rapid deployability to major regional conflicts, not so much to Operations Other Than War.

very specific time and place –the post Vietnam Cold War- became "the only way" of war.[106]

The result of the continued adherence to the post Vietnam narrative during the frequent use of U.S. military power abroad in the 1990s, was the development of a "Force protection" mindset[107] among army officers. Force protection was a natural progression from the logic of overwhelming force and the concern for support from the casualty-sensitive public in the Powell Doctrine. The Powell Doctrine recommended force protection as an organizational defense mechanism against ambiguous political wars that detracted from the army's ability to prepare for major war. The force protection obsession of the 1990s and beyond was a result of the intellectual rigidity imposed on army thinking about legitimate war and organizational purpose by the received wisdom of the post Vietnam narrative.[108]

Entering the 21st century the post Vietnam narrative provided the army with three ambiguous results: 1. it provided a much-needed renewal of professional identity for the officer corps, 2. it unraveled the civil-military consensus of the 1980s, and 3. it emphasized a general trend of risk aversion in the operational army. Through the institutionalization of the DePuyian doctrine system, formal army doctrine grew to paramount importance within the service. Rather than, as was historically the case,

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[106] Linn, 224.; Johnson, 98.; Dana Priest, *The Mission: Waging War and Keeping Peace with America's Military*, (New York: W.W. Norton & Co, 2003), 24.

[107] A FORCEPRO mindset can best be described as adherence to rigid standards of personal protection, limited or perhaps even circumscribed, objectives supported by massive resources, use of airpower and other standoff firepower to limit exposure to danger, operational risk aversion and self-defense prioritized over all other missions.

[108] Andrew, Bacevich, *The New American Millitarism: How Americans are Seduced by War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 58-59.

reflecting conventional practice on warfighting, doctrine was now expected to predict future practice in war and prescribe in detail how wars were to be conducted. This was perhaps achievable under DePuy's rigid and narrow definition of war which was characterized as a short, violent, conventional ground war against the Soviet Union in Europe.[109] However, the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War removed the specificity that allowed this doctrinal system to function. Historian Brian McAllister Linn defined this dynamic in the 1990s as the, "decade of doctrinal floundering."[110] This conservative definition of war that hearkened back to the army's victory in Europe in 1945, narrowed the army's vision and perhaps more importantly, limited what missions were considered legitimate. Thus, doctrine became a key component of officer education, individual soldier identity, unit and soldier success, force structure, and weapons procurement. When combined with the strategic framework of the Powell Doctrine, orthodoxy was introduced into army thought that limited intellectual flexibility. The explicit rejection of the experience of small wars, in the model of Vietnam, and the celebration of high intensity wars like World War II and Desert Storm, formed a dualistic conception of "good" and "bad" wars within the army's philosophy of war.[111]

The unraveling of the power of the Powell Doctrine culminated in the tenure of Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld. Andrew Bacevich observed that Secretary Rumsfeld and his senior officials were, "Determined to have a decisive voice in deciding

[109] Kretchik, 195, 201, 220.; Spiller, 41.; and Crane, *Avoiding Vietnam*, 4.

[110] Linn, 227.

[111] Boot, 324.; Lock-Pullan 497.; and Linn, 228.

when and where U.S. forces would go into battle, they also wanted to dictate *how* those forces would fight.[112] The military gained unprecedented influence in foreign policy in the post Vietnam era, partially as a result of the 1987 Goldwater-Nichols defense reorganization act which created independent regional military combatant and functional commands. During the 1990s these commands played a powerful semi-independent role in regional diplomacy and military policy.[113] The power of combatant commanders combined with Colin Powell's significant personal influence over policy, convinced Rumsfeld that the power of the uniformed military needed to be reined in.[114]

In many respects Secretary Rumsfeld simply overmatched the senior leadership of the army, both intellectually and in ambition. The intellectual drift of the army in the 1990s led them to cling to a philosophy that was increasingly outmoded. While Rumsfeld pursued a "Transformation" agenda[115] that rejected most of the elements of the post Vietnam narrative, the army was consumed with the "color of berets" and the appropriate number of companies for a battalion.[116] Rumsfeld shared the army leadership's faith in the Revolution in Military Affairs and firepower, but shared none of their reticence to use that force for political objectives. Rumsfeld's vision of war as

[112] Bacevich, "Gulliver at Bay," 131.

[113] Priest, 24-28, 47, 396-398.

[114] Bacevich, "Gulliver at Bay," 132.

[115] The use of "transformational" technology to make U.S. forces lighter, more lethal, and easier to use. Demonstrated operationally by the combined Special Forces, Northern Alliance and U.S. Air Force swift destruction of the Taliban government in 2001.

[116] Linn, 238.

short, lethal, and relatively easy -as demonstrated by the 2001 war in Afghanistan- totally undermined the U.S. Army's seemingly ponderous adherence to a Cold War mindset.[117]

The orthodoxy of the DePuy and Powell Doctrine system, as validated by Operation Desert Storm, cost the army an opportunity to reexamine some of the core assumptions of its philosophy of war in the dramatically changed circumstances of the post Cold War era. Ideological retrenchment, doctrinal stasis, and conservatism characterized the intellectual drift of the army in the post Cold War era. The assumptions of DePuy's narrow vision of war had been rendered obsolete by the demise of the Soviet Union and the restrictive power of the Powell Doctrine was unraveled by the success of the Gulf War and changing civilian views on the utility of force. Rather than address any of these contradictions within its philosophy, the army chose to tinker on the margins with new technology and organizational structures while clinging to the vision of future war that had served it so well in the aftermath of Vietnam.

[117] Bacevich, "Gulliver at Bay," 132.; and Linn, 239.

CHAPTER IV

DISSONANCE AND CHANGE IN THE IRAQ WAR

A. Why Did the U.S. Army Change in 2007?

Why did a critical mass of the army's rank-and-file officers[118] accept the shift in tactics and strategy recommended by Generals Petraeus, Keane and Odierno over the established strategy of Generals Casey and Abizaid in 2006 and 2007? From an organizational culture perspective,[119] it would have been easy for the army to simply have accepted the well established assumptions of the Casey strategy: that the army was incapable of nation building and that the situation in Iraq was essentially beyond repair

[118] In the army, marines, and air force, company grade officers are lieutenants and captains while field grade officers are majors, lieutenant colonels, and colonels.

[119] This understanding of organizational culture and change is a synthesis of organizational theories drawn from a diverse literature:
1. From history and political science- Peter H. Wilson, "Defining Military Culture". *The Journal of Military History*. 72, no. 1 (2008); Elizabeth Kier, "Culture and Military Doctrine: France between the Wars" *International Security*. 19, no. 4 (1995).; Isabel V. Hull, *Absolute Destruction: Military Culture and the Practices of War in Imperial Germany* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press: 2005).; Graham T. Allison and Morton H. Halperin. "Bureaucratic Politics: A Paradigm and Some Policy Implications". *World Politics: A Quarterly Journal of International Relations.*24: (1972).; Graham T. Allison. *Essence of Decision; Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis*.(Boston: Little, Brown, 1971).; Morton H. Halperin, Priscilla Clapp, and Arnold Kanter. *Bureaucratic Politics and Foreign Policy*. (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2006).; and Jack Snyder, *The Ideology of the Offensive: Military Decision Making and the Disasters of 1914* (Ithaca N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1984).
2. From sociology- Anselm Strauss, Leonard Schatzman, Danuta Ehrlich, Rue Bucher, and Melvin Sabshin. "The Hospital and its Negotiated Order." In *The Hospital in Modern Society*. ed. Eliot Friedson, (New York: Free Press of Glencoe, 1963), 148, 150.; and Gerald Driskill and Angela Laird Brenton. *Organizational Culture in Action: A Cultural Analysis Workbook.* (Sage Publications: Thousand Oaks, California, 2005), 29.
3. From public policy- [119] David Braybrooke and Charles Edward Lindblom. *A Strategy of Decision; Policy Evaluation As a Social Process*.(New York: Free Press of Glencoe, 1963).; and Charles E. Lindblom. "The Science of Muddling Through". *Public Administration Review*. 19, no. 2, (1959).; Gerald Berk and Dennis Galvan. "How People Experience and Change Institutions: a Field Guide to Creative Syncretism". *Theory and Society.* 38, no. 6, (2009).
4. And from organizational studies- H. Hwang, and W. Powell, "Institutions and Entrepreneurship," In *Handbook of Entrepreneurship.* ed. H. Hwang and W. Powell, (Springer, 2005), 186.; Wesley W.Widmaier, Mark Blyth, and Leonard Seabrooke. "Exogenous Shocks or Endogenous Constructions? The Meanings of Wars and Crises". *International Studies Quarterly.* 51, no. 4, (2007), 755.; Hayagreeva Rao and Simona Giorgi. 2006. "Code Breaking: How Entrepreneurs Exploit Cultural Logics to Generate Institutional Change". *Research in Organizational Behavior.* 27, (2006), 272.; and Karl E.Weick. *Making Sense of the Organization*. (Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishers, 2001), 9.

and accept the inevitable failure of the Iraq mission. While difficult to accept, this failure could have been easily rationalized in the manner of the Vietnam War by blaming senior Bush Administration officials and the much-maligned Coalition Provisional Authority for "losing" the war through poor planning and disastrous decision making. This narrative would have found favor with the broader conventional wisdom of the time by virtue of the many failures and questionable justifications for the initial invasion. This variation of the "stab-in-the-back" myth[120] could have absolved the army of responsibility for losing the war and enabled the army to make a strong argument against engaging in 1990s-style nation building and irregular warfare ever again.

Thus, organizational theory would predict that the army would have resisted any significant change in 2007, blamed civilian political leaders for failure, and retrenched into the post Vietnam narrative with a reinforcement of existing beliefs and values about legitimate war.[121] Despite the cultural logic of this predicted outcome, the army changed in significant and fundamental ways in the Iraq War. The Casey and Abizaid strategy was clearly in line with powerful cultural values established by DePuy and Powell after Vietnam: the preference for unambiguous, high intensity war and the discomfort with limited, political contingency operations. However, the Casey strategy resulted in irreconcilable contradictions at the tactical level, creating dissonance between what the strategy demanded and what tactical level commanders were compelled to do to succeed.

[120] An unsophisticated interpretation of Colonel Harry Summers' *On Strategy* in which military success in the field is betrayed by venal politicians and a feckless public at home.

[121] Iraq would join Vietnam as a paradigmatic "bad" war while World War II and the Gulf War would remain as the ideal of "real" war.

At the tactical level the Casey strategy seemed designed not to achieve decisive success and Petraeus, Keane, and Odierno systematically addressed this by creating an intellectual framework for dealing with the complexities of Iraq through counterinsurgency doctrine, by achieving unity and commitment from the senior levels of government, and by finally creating a coherent and offensive campaign plan designed to achieve success. Essentially, Generals Petraeus, Keane and Odierno made a better argument for their strategic vision than did Casey and Abizaid. The Petraeus coalition recast the doctrinal and strategic conception of the war as based on achieving victory rather than on Casey's more abstract institutional conception of avoiding another Vietnam War-style defeat.

B. The Casey/Abizaid Strategy

> "Boring is good, General Casey, and I applaud you on that…
> Clearly you are a master at it and it goes to the heart of your success."[122]

General George Casey was an uncontroversial and "safe" choice to follow the bombastic and prickly Lieutenant General Ricardo Sanchez as the senior U.S. commander in Iraq.[123] Casey was the son of Major General George Casey, Sr., the highest ranking officer killed in the Vietnam War. The aftermath of the Vietnam left a powerful imprint on Casey and many other officers of his generation; as a young officer

[122] Senator Hillary Clinton to General George Casey at his Senate confirmation for top command in the Iraq War, 2004. Cloud and Jaffe, 168.

[123] Casey was selected for command without being interviewed by Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld or President Bush, nor was he asked by about his plans for Iraq. Chief of Staff of the Army, General Schoomaker gave Casey a copy of Lieutenant Colonel John Nagl's book, *Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife*, a comparison of British and American counterinsurgency experiences in Southeast Asia that Casey admitted that was the first book he had read on guerrilla war. Casey's conformist career-path and apolitical reputation as a steady manager insured his confirmation by the U.S. Senate. From David Cloud and Greg Jaffe, *The Fourth Star: Four Generals and the Epic Struggle for the Future of the United States Army* (New York: Crown Publishing: 2009), 162, 168.

he had to deal with the post Vietnam morass of poor discipline, rampant drug use, and racial tension within the ranks. During his career he was promoted rapidly and experienced the difficulty of nation building first-hand in the 1996 U.S. mission in Bosnia. Journalists David Cloud and Greg Jaffe characterized Casey as a diligent and intelligent officer, "the model Pentagon general: steady, apolitical, and hardworking."[124]

Upon assumption of command, Casey initially maintained General Sanchez's enemy-centric, capture/kill campaign against "Anti-Iraqi Forces,"[125] but by the spring of 2004 Casey formulated his own approach, which had, "two priority efforts – training Iraqi Security Forces and elections." [126] It was assumed that a legitimate elected Iraqi government untainted by close association with U.S. forces would remove much of the fire from the insurgent cause. Casey recalled later that while he was aware that the support of the people was required in counterinsurgency war, "I came at it little differently, I said, Yeah it's the people, but the way we're going to get to the people is through a legitimate government."[127] Casey's emphasis on elections was a result of his experience in the Balkans in the 1990s, where elections were seen as essential to the U.S. exit strategy. Casey's strategy, based upon shifting security responsibility from U.S.

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[124] Cloud and Jaffe, *The Fourth Sta*r, 19, 81, 104, 162.

[125] "Anti-Iraqi Forces" was a U.S. military blanket term for insurgents.

[126] General Casey was never given a mission statement for the war by any civilian or military superiors, so he and incoming U.S. ambassador to Iraq, John Negroponte sketched one in his Washington D.C. office before they left for Iraq. This mission statement emphasized representative government, respect for human rights, the rule of law, public order, border integrity and peaceful relations with neighbors. It was only after his confirmation that Secretary Rumsfeld met with Casey privately for a 20 minute discussion of the Iraq War in which Rumsfeld emphasized two points: 1. that the U.S. was not remaking Iraq and that he wanted troops out as soon as possible, and 2. that Casey should, "resist the temptation to do too much." This meeting was followed by a private dinner with the President at which both men's wives attended and the business of the Iraq War was not discussed.
From Cloud and Jaffe, 169.

[127] Cloud and Jaffe, 170.

forces to Iraqi government forces came to be known as the "Transition" strategy and would define U.S. operations in Iraq from 2004 until early 2007.

In 2004 Casey planned for immediate troop reductions after the first national elections in early 2005.[128] After national elections failed to quell the insurgency in March of 2005, Casey, with Abizaid's consent, defined his Transition strategy as focusing primarily on the rapid transfer of security responsibility to the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) with a corresponding U.S. withdrawal from Iraq. Casey accelerated the training of Iraqi security units and shifted much of the burden on supplying trainers from the chronically understaffed Multinational Security Transition Command (MNSTC-I) to the "land-owning" brigade combat teams responsible for area security.

In June 2006, despite the rising tide of sectarian violence in the wake of the February bombing of the Al Askari Mosque in Samarra, General Casey briefed the President and Secretary of Defense his "Securing Strategic Victory" plan that claimed Multinational Forces- Iraq (MNF-I) was on track to reduce troop strength from 134,000 to 110,000 in the fall. Despite concern from the White House that Casey "wasn't going for the win," Casey's plan was approved.[129] To counter growing calls for an escalation in Iraq from certain quarters in Washington after the failure of his attempts to secure Baghdad in 2006,[130] Casey developed a "Transition Bridging Strategy" to use a limited increase in troop strength to man joint outposts in Baghdad with Iraqi Security Forces,

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[128] Cloud and Jaffe, 174.

[129] Bob Woodward, *The War Within: A Secret White House History 2006-2008*. (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2008) 10-13.

[130] In late 2006 there were parallel administration (under the National Security Council), military (the Joint Chiefs of Staff "Council of Colonels"), and civilian (the American Enterprise Institute think tank) Iraq strategy reviews under way. From Ricks, *The Gamble*, 90, 94, 113.

while the majority of U.S. forces would leave population centers altogether. This plan envisioned U.S. forces sealing the borders and controlling supply routes to Kuwait while the Iraqi Security Forces fought the insurgency in the cities with embedded U.S. advisors. In a December 2006 briefing to an increasingly skeptical President Bush, Casey maintained that the Iraqi Security Forces could take over security by the summer of 2007 and that no additional U.S. troops were needed.[131] While also recommend by General Abizaid and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, General Peter Pace, this plan was not chosen for implementation by President Bush who favored the larger, more concentrated surge effort.[132]

Logic of the Transition Strategy

The strategic thinking behind Casey's strategy was based upon two explicit logical claims and two equally powerful implicit claims. The first claim was based on the idea that U.S. forces attracted violence and fomented insurgent attacks by virtue of the Iraqi perceptions of the U.S. as an occupier. This idea was based on a narrative championed by Central Command (CENTCOM) commander, General John Abizaid.[133]

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[131] Cloud and Jaffe, 255.

[132] This was called the "2 plus 2" plan (two army Brigades plus two marine battalions committed sequentially) in contrast to the more aggressive five brigade and two marine battalion plan favored by Keane, Odierno, and the AEI. From Woodward, *The War Within*, 296; and Ricks, *The Gamble*, 345-349.

[133] John Abizaid appears to be a poor example of a conformist army "company man" like Casey. Of Lebanese descent, Abizaid attended graduate school in Jordan and was among a small handful of Arabic-speaking U.S. Army officers. He was a minor celebrity within the army after the invasion of Grenada. In a scene later adapted for the film, *Heartbreak Ridge,* Abizaid used a hotwired bulldozer to charge a Cuban machine gun position. He served as a UN observer in southern Lebanon during the Israel occupation after their 1983 invasion of that country. After the Gulf War, Abizaid served in Northern Iraq in Operation Provide Comfort, in which he placed his battalion between Kurds and Saddam's army. This experience led him to view Iraq as a country of "barely suppressed hatreds" among its peoples. Abizaid followed Tommy Franks as commanding general of CENTCOM and served as Casey's immediate commander. Abizaid was one of the army's most experienced combat commanders and enjoyed unrivaled credibility by virtue of his language ability and long service in the Middle East. Cloud and Jaffe, 48-49, 86-90.

Abizaid used the biology metaphor of an "antibody"[134] to illustrate the position of U.S. forces in Iraqi society. Because of unbridgeable cultural differences and the deep dysfunction of Iraqi society, U.S. forces would always be greeted with a violent reaction as an antibody in the "system" of Iraqi society. Since Iraqis were humiliated by their defeat at the hands of the U.S. and they perceived the U.S. as an illegitimate and alien foreign occupier, Abizaid believed that any U.S. effort in Iraq was bound to fail and he supported the search for "quick fixes" to the war in 2003 and 2004 to speed U.S. exit. Abizaid's antibody narrative and his significant moral authority formed a critical justification for Casey's Transition strategy.[135] Casey's acceptance of the antibody narrative was also in accord with his own experience as a young officer in the aftermath of Vietnam, during ambiguous peacekeeping missions in the 1990s, and in line with Secretary Rumsfeld's admonishment to "resist the temptation to do too much" in Iraq.[136]

The second explicit logic of the Transition strategy was that the average counterinsurgency war lasted 9 to 13 years, which, in light of the lessons of Vietnam, Casey viewed as too long for U.S. public support to last. The way to bridge this gap was to train more Iraqi forces to take over fighting the insurgency as U.S. forces withdrew.[137] This reasoning was drawn directly from the conventional lessons drawn from the

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[134] The seemingly irreconcilable hatred between Arabs and Israelis in Lebanon and Kurds and Arabs in Iraq convinced him of the absolute truth of the antibody metaphor; that Iraq as a country of "barely suppressed hatreds" among its peoples. This narrative was similar to the "ancient hatreds" explanation of ethnic conflict in the former Yugoslavia in which Abizaid had served as Casey's fellow assistant division commander . From Stephen Schwartz, "Beyond `Ancient Hatreds.'". *Policy Review*. 99, no. 97, (1999),1-3; and Cloud and Jaffe, 104.

[135] Cloud and Jaffe, 137; and Peter Mansoor, "Army," in *Understanding Counterinsurgency Doctrine, Operations, and Challenges*, ed. Thomas Rid and Thomas Keaney (Hoboken: Taylor & Francis, 2010), 77.

[136] Cloud and Jaffe, 169.

[137] Ibid., 190.

Vietnam War and one of the critical points of the Powell Doctrine. Counterinsurgency war simply took too long and exacted too high a price in casualties from the counterinsurgent force, sapping public support for the effort. In order to maintain public support, both for the war and the army, Casey felt compelled to keep U.S. casualties low and keep the duration of the war short.

While not stated explicitly, Casey clearly believed that the political aspects of counterinsurgency war were inappropriate, and perhaps even impossible, tasks for the military to undertake. In response to a fruitless effort to address early evidence of sectarianism in the ISF[138] Casey recalled that, "As a military guy, I didn't feel like I ought to dictate to the prime minister." Casey interpreted his purview as senior U.S. commander in Iraq in a narrowly military way. He didn't believe that political or economic issues were his concern in a "sovereign" country with a full U.S. ambassador in residence. Casey preferred strictly militarily achievable tasks; a mindset Casey developed in the aftermath of the Vietnam War and from his experience with peacekeeping missions in the 1990s. He assumed that military power could establish security, but that it couldn't force political compromise or moderate sectarian divisions.[139]

The final implicit claim of the of the Transition strategy was that the Iraq War, much as the Vietnam War had over twenty years earlier, had the potential to "break" the

[138] In 2005 a U.S. brigadier general uncovered a Ministry of Interior secret torture facility in central Baghdad full of Sunni prisoners. This general delivered photographs of this facility, its detainees, and brought a box of torture implements to show General Casey as evidence of growing sectarianism in the Shia-dominated Ministry of Interior. General Casey took this evidence to the Iraqi Minister of the Interior and the Prime Minister, but failed to secure the Interior Minister's resignation.

[139] Cloud and Jaffe, 211, 215.

army as an institution. A long and ambiguous war in Iraq would endanger public support for the institution and blunt its capabilities in conventional war. This logic was also informed by the post Vietnam understanding that tactical military success could be easily voided by short-sighted political leaders at home. Therefore, in the best interests of the health of the army, a repetition of the trauma of the Vietnam War should be avoided at all costs. Subsequently, the commitment to the Iraq War needed to be limited in both time and scope with a rapid exit strategy.[140]

Strategic Failure of Transition, 2004-2007

Among Casey's first major decisions in 2004 was to order the closing of nearly all U.S. outposts in population centers and to consolidate U.S. forces on larger and more remote Forward Operating Bases (FOBs). The FOB consolidation plan was designed to remove the "irritant" of U.S. soldiers from neighborhoods and to reduce U.S. casualties. The immediate result of the withdrawal from population centers in 2004 was not a decrease in violence, but an increase, as U.S. forces ceded territory to Sunni and Shia militias. As U.S. forces patrolled from more remote FOBs they began to use heavier armored vehicles to protect themselves from the increased improvised explosive device (IED) threats on the "commutes" to their sectors. This distance and armor increasingly isolated the soldiers from the population and made it difficult for them to control the level of violence and maintain an enduring presence in Iraqi population centers. The concern for U.S. casualties also introduced a trend of risk aversion among U.S. units; some were unwilling or unable to completely secure their sectors operating out of FOBs. The net

[140] For a discussion of Casey's institutional concerns see: Bruce Auster, "America's Broken Army," *National Public Radio*, January 9, 2009. http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=99154498 (accessed October 10, 2011).

result of the isolation of U.S. forces from the Iraqi people, the general level of insecurity from this force posture, and the risk-averse attitude it created, was a growing irrelevance of U.S. forces on the course of the Iraq War.[141]

Casey's response to the difficulty in controlling the level of violence was to focus even more on the transfer of security control to Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) so that they could take over security operations while U.S. forces continued consolidation for eventual withdrawal. Rushing ill-prepared ISF units into the offensives of 2004, the sectarian composition of the police and the army, and the overall failure of the ISF to match the insurgency in capabilities, made this strategy increasingly difficult to sustain in 2005 and 2006. Since the Iraqi Security Forces, and the entire Iraqi government, were heavily infiltrated and intimidated by Shia extremists, the larger Iraqi Sunni community viewed them and the U.S. as implacable enemies. This drove Sunnis to support violent Sunni extremist groups like Al Qaeda in Iraq to an even greater extent, inflaming sectarian tensions and the anti-U.S. insurgency. Casey's 2006 offensives to secure Baghdad - Operations Together Forward I and II - actually escalated sectarian violence by inserting Shia-dominated ISF outposts into previously denied Sunni territory. This enabled the Shia extremists to extend their reach into Sunni-dominated neighborhoods with the collusion and acquiescence of Iraqi Security Forces. Rather than allowing the U.S. to withdraw from Iraq under conditions of relative security, the singular focus on transfer of authority from U.S. forces to Iraqi forces regardless of capability or sectarian bias, endangered the fate of the entire U.S. effort in Iraq.[142]

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[141] Mansoor, "Army," 77; and Cloud and Jaffe, 190.

[142] Mansour, "Army," 77-78; and Kagan, *The Surge: A Military History*, 18-21.

The Transition strategy was predicated on the existence of a legitimate Iraqi government and a minimally capable Iraqi security apparatus. Based upon Casey's observation from Bosnia that the military "can't make people love each other" and his demonstrated reluctance to intervene in the political aspects of the war, the Transition strategy became rigid and unable to adapt to the changing dynamics of the conflict. By not addressing the sectarian policies of the government and the military, the U.S. became viewed by many Sunni's as at best irrelevant, or at worst a Shia partisan in the sectarian war. Since Transition relied so heavily on the Iraqi government and ISF legitimacy, U.S. forces were constrained from making long-term local accommodations or taking advantage of local power dynamics. The U.S. was unable to commit as a credible partner or neutral actor in the war. Any local tactical development that appeared to weaken or undermine the Iraqi government, such as empowering traditional tribal leaders or allowing Sunni groups to defend their own neighborhoods, was rejected out of hand by Casey's headquarters as violating the Transition strategy. This issue of sectarianism at the highest levels of the government of Iraq and its security forces had tremendous implications for the viability of the entire Transition enterprise. This remained an unexamined contradiction of this strategy throughout Casey's tenure as commander in Iraq.[143]

Finally, the singular drive for the rapid withdrawal of U.S. forces from Iraq precluded the establishment of baseline security. With its forces isolated from the Iraqi population and failing to address the sectarian nature of the security services and government, U.S. forces were increasingly irrelevant to the course of the war. Casey

[143] Cloud and Jaffe, 215

found himself in the unique position of simultaneously not being able to make credible commitments to reconcile with Sunni insurgents while also not exercising any leverage over his erstwhile Shia allies in the Iraqi government and military. Since his strategy was so clearly directed at a rapid withdrawal from the conflict, no one, not tribal leaders, Shia politicians and soldiers, or Sunni insurgents, took seriously the U.S. commitment to long-term security and stability in Iraq. The Transition strategy prevented the reinforcement of tactical successes, as successful operations in Tal 'Afar and Ramadi in 2005 and 2006 were used as opportunities to accelerate the withdrawal of U.S. forces.

C. Responses to Dissonance

Non-Progressive Adaptation

There is a powerful assumption within innovation literature[144] that portrays organizational change in the military as a sort of forward march of increasingly effective progress. The progressive element of "organizational learning" arguments central to James Russell's *Innovation, Transformation, and War* and Steven Metz's monograph, *Decisionmaking in OIF: The Strategic Shift of 2007* is based on evidence that through multiple deployments and experimentation, U.S. units simply got better in the Iraq War. In some instances, particularly when army units had exceptional leadership and were far from the central headquarters, this logic of progressive adaption holds true. Significantly, all of Russell's case studies are based on army and marine battalions in the relatively remote Ninewah and Anbar provinces, with none drawn from the capital, Baghdad. Metz and Russell are not necessarily wrong in their argument; there was substantial innovation

[144] For a very conventional treatment of military innovation and organizational change see: Suzanne Nielsen, *An Army Transformed: The U.S. Army's Post-Vietnam Recovery and the Dynamics of Change in Military Organizations*. (Carlisle, Pennsylvania: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, 2010).

in parts of the Iraq War, specifically on the periphery of the war. However, examples of successful innovation, such as the 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment (3rd ACR) in the Tal ‘Afar campaign in 2005 and the 1st Brigade of the 1st Armored Division (1/1 AD) in Ramadi in 2006, do not prove that there was a virtuous cycle of tactical innovation and adaptation throughout all army units in the war. The opposite result of successful adaptation is also a likely and logical result: non-progressive adaptation. That is to say that certain units and leaders regressed in their tactical adaptation; they failed to successfully adapt to the challenges they faced and increasingly turned to force protection measures and firepower to compensate for their inability to quell the insurgency

Determining success or failure can be a contentious and complex issue with regard to tactical performance during the Iraq War. The examples in this section are based on a narrow interpretation of success, which is considered to be an effective reduction in violence and the establishment of baseline security. Many army units were placed in impossible situations where success may have been all but impossible to achieve due to the constraints of limited resources, strategy, geographic location, and of course, enemy action. However, most army units sought to serve effectively and accomplish their mission, as they understood it, to the best of their abilities. The reality of war, no less true in counterinsurgency, is that good intentions are not enough to ensure success. In many cases units and officers in the Iraq War failed to achieve success as it is defined here.

In contrast to the successful cases of innovation in the 3rd ACR in Tal ‘Afar and 1/1 AD in Ramadi, four distinct trends among combat units in Iraq demonstrate the potential for non-progressive adaptation at the tactical level: the rejection of

counterinsurgency tactics by senior commanders, the collapse of discipline under extreme pressure, the escalation of violence in the face of high casualties, and finally a general pattern of risk aversion. The first two examples are drawn from the experience of the 101st Airborne Division in 2005 and 2006. Significantly, this was the same division commanded by General Petraeus to wide acclaim in the 2003 stabilization campaign in Mosul. The fact that units from an elite and experienced division could demonstrate a form of tactical regression or "unlearning," demonstrates that linear, progressive organizational innovation arguments do not capture the entire picture of organizational change in the Iraq War.

Successful Innovation

Tal 'Afar, Iraq 2005:

"You need to stop thinking strategically."[145]

Colonel McMaster assumed command of the 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment[146] in 2004 after serving on the CENTCOM staff. He immediately revolutionized the unit's preparation for its next Iraq deployment by focusing on light infantry skills; training every soldier as a rifleman first and specialist second; adopting a counterinsurgency mindset characterized by McMaster's oft-repeated mantra, "Don't do the enemy's work;" emphasizing Arabic language skills at the small unit level; and discarding traditional

[145] U.S. Army brigadier general to Colonel H.R. McMaster in Mosul, 2005. Cloud and Jaffe, 207.

[146] The 3rd ACR was a Cold War "legacy" heavy armor organization built to accomplish Corps level reconnaissance and security missions against the Red Army in Europe armed with Abrams tanks, Bradley fighting vehicles, scout helicopters, Apache attack helicopters and self-propelled artillery pieces. The 3rd ACR was criticized for its heavy handed approach to its security operations in Anbar province in the immediate aftermath of the invasion.

mechanized combat training for Iraq-specific scenarios featuring Arabic-speaking role players.[147]

While serving in South Baghdad in 2005, the 3rd ACR was sent to retake the city of Tal 'Afar[148] which was a center of insurgent resistance and training, fueling the growing violence in the strategic northern city of Mosul less than 50 miles away.[149] McMaster initiated a cautious reconnaissance around Tal 'Afar and developed a campaign plan that journalist George Packer characterized as the "anti-Fallujah," in stark contrast to earlier large scale clearance operations in 2004 in Fallujah, Najaf, and Baghdad's Sadr City.[150] Operation Restoring Rights was a jointly conceived plan between the U.S. 3rd ACR, elements of the Iraqi Army 3rd Division, and local Tal 'Afar officials, specifically the mayor who suggested isolating the entire town with an earthen berm.

1000 U.S. troops and nearly 8000 Iraqi Security Forces conducted a phased clearance operation that began with securing major routes around the city, an effort to

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[147] David R. McCone, Wilbur J. Scott, and George R. Mastroianni. *The 3rd ACR in Tal'Afar: Challenges and Adaptations*. (Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania: Strategic Studies Institute, 2007). 5-7. In 2004 it was quite a departure for an armored unit to prioritize infantry skills over their own specialty and adopt Iraq-specific scenario training, many units continued to focus on their particular high intensity skill sets before deploying to Iraq well into 2005.

[148] Tal Afar was a complicated mix of former Iraqi Army soldiers, Al Qaeda in Iraq operatives, Sunnis, Shias, and ethnic Turkomen where Sunni extremists and foreign jihadis were terrorizing local Shia, Iraqi government and security forces. Home to many former Iraqi army warrant officers and non commissioned officers, this area was an important technical training ground and weapons manufacturing center for the Sunni insurgency. This area had been cleared, held, and lost before. The 101st Airborne Division held it in 2004, but was replaced by a brigade that was less than a third its size and Tal Afar had been thinly and intermittently held ever since.

[149] George Packer, "Letter From Iraq - The Lesson of Tal Afar - The Pentagon Ignores Its Own Success Story," *The New Yorker,* 2006, 49.; and Paul Yingling, "Interview with LTC Paul Yingling," Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. U.S. Army Combat Studies Institute. September 22, 2006, 5.

[150] Packer, 54.

reduce insurgent support zones outside the town, and gaining control of the population through secured entry control points at the breaks in the berm. Most residents relocated to the homes of family members outside of Tal 'Afar or moved into temporary refugee camps provided by the U.S. forces. This effort was followed by the development of deep local knowledge of tribal power dynamics. After four months of preparation U.S. and Iraqi forces retook the city with overwhelming force, but did not level the city. Tal 'Afar was then held by U.S., Iraqi Army, and Iraqi Police forces from small, joint outposts located throughout the city in local neighborhoods. These forces immediately began U.S. and Iraqi government funded reconstruction and humanitarian assistance projects to restore the city.[151]

McMaster's overriding emphasis throughout this operation was on securing the population of Tal 'Afar as a neutral actor. He had concluded that the U.S. must lead and closely supervise all Iraqi Security Forces because of their actual, and perceived by the Sunni population, infiltration by Shia extremists and sectarian bias.[152] Lieutenant Colonel Yingling, the 3rd ACR Deputy Commander, recounted the example of an Iraqi unit acting as a sectarian partisan in Tal 'Afar. "We had introduced into the city, an MoI [Ministry of Interior] special police commando brigade [the Wolf Brigade], and these were not disciplined forces…we asked for their removal…and got it…because they were creating insecurity…" The realization that the Iraqi Security Forces were not able to act as a neutral party to quell the Sunni insurgency put McMaster's successful Tal 'Afar campaign strategy at odds with General Casey's "Transition" strategy. An exchange

[151] Ricks, Fiasco, 421-422.; and David R. McCone, Wilbur J. Scott, and George R. Mastroianni, *The 3rd ACR in Tal'Afar: Challenges and Adaptations*, (Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania: Strategic Studies Institute, 2007), 14-18.

[152] Cloud and Jaffe, 206.

between an army brigadier general from Multi-National Security Training Command-Iraq (MNSTC-I)[153] and Colonel McMaster revealed this strategic tension. The general chided McMaster for his lack of understanding of General Casey's strategy and that doing too much for the Iraqis, particularly the Iraqi Security Forces, undermined Iraqi success and jeopardized the U.S. exit strategy. McMaster responded that, "It is unclear to me how a higher degree of passivity would advance our mission."[154] George Packer described Operation Restoring Rights as a success, "despite an absence of guidance from senior civilian and military leaders" and described McMaster and other tactical innovators as, "rebels against and incoherent strategy."[155]

Ramadi, Iraq 2006:

"When you don't have a horse, ride a dog." [156]

Colonel Sean MacFarland and his 1st Brigade Combat Team of the 1st Armored Division (1/1 AD) tour of duty in Ramadi in 2006 corresponded with the critical Sunni tribal realignment in Anbar province, known as the Anbar Awakening to the Americans and as "*sahwa*" to the Iraqis. Colonel MacFarland replaced McMaster in Tal 'Afar in early 2006 but was pulled out in June and ordered to take over responsibility for the provincial capital Ramadi. MacFarland and his Marine Corps superiors received little strategic guidance from MNF-I headquarters for this operation, as it was consumed with spiraling levels of sectarian violence in the capital. Ramadi was easily one of the most

[153] Casey's principal command responsible for training the Iraqi Security Forces.

[154] Cloud and Jaffe, 208.

[155] Packer, 50.

[156] Tribal Iraqi proverb. Loosely translated as: make the best out of a bad situation.

dangerous cities in all of Iraq in 2006, with wide swaths of the city openly controlled by Sunni extremists and Al Qaeda in Iraq, who had declared Ramadi the capital of its new Iraqi "caliphate."[157]

It was within this atmosphere of spiraling violence in Baghdad and apparent stalemate in Anbar, that Colonel MacFarland and his staff planned to retake the city. In a 2008 article for *Military Review,* Colonel MacFarland and one of his operations officers, Major Niel Smith, authored an article about their experiences. MacFarland described his campaign plan as similar to the "Island hopping" campaign of the U.S. in the Pacific in World War II. "We decided to employ a tactic we had borrowed from the 3d Armored Cavalry Regiment and used successfully in Tal 'Afar: the combat outpost…a constant presence in disputed neighborhoods."[158]

MacFarland adapted the Tal 'Afar campaign plan to the local conditions of Ramadi. 1/1AD attempted to isolate the city and reduce support zones on the outskirts, but Ramadi was significantly larger than Tal 'Afar, and a berm was simply not feasible. MacFarland adjusted by using combat outposts, not as a post-combat stability measure as in Tal 'Afar, but as an offensive weapon against the insurgency. 1/1 AD became experts at rapid construction and occupation of outposts in insurgent dominated neighborhoods. Once an area came under control of U.S. forces, MacFarland rapidly moved into

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[157] Many within the U.S. command viewed Anbar as a "lost" province as shown by a classified I MEF G2 (Intelligence) report on the state of the insurgency leaked to the press in summer of 2006 which stated, "MNF [Multi National Forces] and ISF [Iraqi Security Forces] are no longer capable of militarily defeating the insurgency in Anbar." As late as August MNF-I was considering pulling two battalions out of MacFarland's brigade to aid the flagging Operation Together Forward in Baghdad. Michaels, 81; Ricks, *The Gamble*, 339; and William Doyle, *A Soldier's Dream: Captain Travis Patriquin and the Awakening of Iraq*, (New York: New American Library), 2011, 280-281.

[158] Niel Smith and Sean MacFarland, 2008. "Anbar Awakens: The Tipping Point," *Military Review*, 88, no. 2 (2008): 45-46.

reconstruction and assistance and sought to recruit local Iraqis to serve as police in their own neighborhoods. Development assistance was funneled to cooperative local leaders as a reward for cooperation. Areas that became relatively safe would be transitioned to Iraqi control, with close U.S. supervision to prevent sectarian tension between the majority Shia army and the Sunni residents, and the combat units would "hop" to another contested area.[159]

MacFarland identified two critical elements of his brigade's approach to the seemingly impossible task of retaking Ramadi from the insurgency. First, he identified a genuine and credible commitment to local leaders as critical:

> Instead of telling them that we would leave soon and they must assume responsibility for their own security, we told them that we would stay as long as necessary to defeat the terrorists. That was the message they had been waiting to hear. As long as they perceived us as mere interlopers, they dared not throw in their lot with ours. When they began to think of us as reliable partners, their attitudes began to change.[160]

Second, he committed to allowing locally recruited Iraqis to serve as police in their own neighborhoods, and he used combat outposts to consolidate security gains. Allowing local police to serve in their own neighborhoods generated resistance from 1/1 AD's higher headquarters as the local police initiative was viewed as arming a tribal militia that might challenge the Government of Iraq in the future. However, MacFarland argued strongly for the tactic and was allowed to proceed with his plan.[161]

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[159] Ibid., 43.

[160] Ibid., 44.

[161] Ibid., 45-47.

MacFarland and Smith called the emergence of Sheikh Sittar abu Risha and his anti-Al Qaeda tribal council as the "Tipping Point" in the battle for Ramadi. Sheikh Sittar and 50 other Ramadi-area sheikhs declared the *sahwa* or awakening on September 9, 2006. This tribal realignment against Al Qaeda was secured by the Battle of Sufia in which Al Qaeda staged a large scale assault on the Abu Soda clan in an attempt to break the nascent awakening movement. Instead of waiting on the sidelines of this battle as many U.S. units had done in the past, 1/1 AD units attacked the Al Qaeda fighters with close air support and artillery fire until a mechanized relief convoy reached the embattled clan. This overt act of support for the awakening and the decimation of the Al Qaeda fighters cemented the relationship between the *Sahwa* tribes and U.S. forces.[162]

This "pattern of change" within army and marine units that took advantage of the awakening movement in Anbar was characterized by a pragmatic approach to seeking local solutions to local problems, an understanding of tribal and clan power dynamics, and a recognition of the realignment between tribal interests and U.S. security interests.[163] In the summer of 2006 the U.S. believed that Anbar was lost and Al Qaeda believed that it was ascendant in the province, openly controlling its largest city. The ensuing spread of the Anbar Awakening throughout the province in late 2006 and early 2007 resulted in a complete reversal of fortunes for both Al Qaeda and the U.S. This movement was the inspiration and the model that General Petraeus would seize upon in 2007 and institute all over Iraq as the Sons of Iraq.[164]

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[162] Ibid., 48-49.

[163] John A. McCary, "The Anbar Awakening: An Alliance of Incentives," *Washington Quarterly*, 32, no. 1 (2009): 51.

Unsuccessful Adaptation

The impression that most units engaged in productive innovation can provide a misleading view of change. The lack of a coherent strategy in Iraq caused many army leaders not to engage in a virtuous cycle of innovation free from the restrictions of higher headquarters interference, but to fall back on the skills that they knew best amidst the ambiguity and uncertainty of Iraq: high-intensity combat. Just as evolution isn't always progressive in the sense of positive adaptation, neither is military adaptation in wartime always progressive. Not all units reacted to the difficult tactical challenges and the ambiguous nature of Iraq as optimally as the 3rd ACR in Tal 'Afar or 1/1 AD in Ramadi. In many cases the dissonance generated by the Transition strategy resulted in distinctly suboptimal outcomes: units collapsed under pressure, units and leaders focused solely on their own protection to the detriment of the mission, or units engaged in increasingly inappropriate tactical reactions that created a spiral of mutually reinforcing mistrust and violence between U.S. units and the people that they were ostensibly tasked to secure.

Rejection of Counterinsurgency Tactics

Colonel Michael Steele, commander of the 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (3/101), was an experienced officer and veteran of the 1993 Battle of Mogadishu. He was also an unapologetic adherent to high-intensity combat and killing as the essence of warfare. In speeches delivered to his soldiers at Fort Campbell and in Samarra, Iraq, Steele emphasized that victory was achieved by "getting violent the

[164] Michaels, 209.

fastest."[165] Although escalation of force is a common and logical aspect of high-intensity combat, it can prove detrimental to the overall mission in small war operations.[166]

Steele was not unique among many in the army in focusing on the enemy, but he was unique in the extreme manner in which he executed his mission. He held counterinsurgency theorists and reconstruction advocates in utter disdain and encouraged his subordinate commanders to post "kill boards" that recorded the number of Iraqis killed during the deployment. Also, not unusual among army officers by 2006, he held almost all Iraqis in contempt. Again, he took this distrust and lack of cultural understanding to an extreme level.[167]

In May of 2006, Colonel Steele received a written reprimand from General Chiarelli, effectively ending his career, for his contributing role in the deaths of three detainees at the hands of four soldiers from his brigade in a raid in Thar Thar outside of Samarra. Steele was reprimanded specifically for "misrepresenting the Rules of Engagement" to his soldiers. Four soldiers were convicted in a court-martial of shooting three detained Iraqis and then covering up the crime. Several soldiers involved in the operation cited specific instructions from Colonel Steele to kill all males of fighting age

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[165] Ricks, *The Gamble*, 35-36.

[166] Counterinsurgency theory advocates the utmost discrimination in the use of force as Lieutenant Colonel John Vann observed during the Vietnam War: "Guerrilla warfare requires the utmost discrimination in killing." from Boot, *The Savage Wars of Peace*, 299.

[167] During an operations briefing to General Chiarelli (Lieutenant General Peter Chiarelli, commander of Multinational Corps-Iraq (MNC-I), the principal operational military commander in Iraq under General Casey) first refused to admit a senior Iraqi National Police general into the briefing and then refused to transport the Iraqi general in one of his humvees. He did this despite the fact that General Chiarelli had invited the Iraqi general to accompany him to the briefing. General Chiarelli overrode Steele and ordered him to transport and brief the Iraqi general. This incident is quite revealing for several reasons: first, Steele felt such animosity for Iraqis that he insulted the guest of the Multi National Corps-Iraq commander twice and secondly, because of Steele's obvious disregard for the stated primary mission of both MNF-I and MNC-I: the training and transfer of security to Iraqi Security Forces. Cloud and Jaffe, 225-226.

on the objective, an allegation Steele denied. Frustration with the progress of the war, the contradictions of strategy, and the perceived disloyalty of Iraqi Security Forces, all led to growing resentment by U.S. soldiers toward most Iraqis, civilian and insurgent alike. Colonel Steele's rejection of counterinsurgency tactics and his intellectual conception of war as simple violence, while extreme, was not outside of the dominant cultural norms of the army. Just as the leadership of McMaster and MacFarland enabled their units to successfully innovate, the leadership of Steele fostered the ineffective use of excessive force in an example of non-progressive adaptation.[168]

Collapse of Discipline

On March 6, 2006 in the Mahmudiayah area south of Baghdad, four U.S. soldiers from Bravo Company, 1st Battalion, 502nd Parachute Infantry Regiment, 101st Airborne Division (1-502 PIR) committed one of the worst war crimes of the Iraq War. These soldiers left their checkpoint and raped a teenage girl, murdered her entire family, and then set the corpses on fire to cover up the crime. Journalist Jim Frederick, in his excellent account of this tragedy, *Black Hearts*, detailed how, "the travails of Bravo Company are a study in the tactical consequences that flow from a flawed strategy." [169] The 700 man 1-502 PIR infantry battalion was given security responsibility for over 300 square miles of the "Triangle of Death," a Sunni insurgent stronghold south of Baghdad. In a manner similar to Colonel MacFarland's 1/1 AD, this battalion was given vague

[168] Cloud and Jaffe, 225-226; Ricks, *The Gamble*, 36; Joshua Pantesco, "Third U.S. Soldier Pleads Guilty in Samarra Iraqi Detainee Killings," *Jurist*, (January 25, 2007). http://jurist.org/paperchase/2007/01/third-us-soldier-pleads-guilty-in.php (accessed April 24, 2012).; and Paul von Zielbauer, "Army Says Improper Orders by Colonel Led to 4 Deaths," New York Times, January 21, 2007, http://www.nytimes.com/2007/01/21/world/middleeast/21abuse.html?_r=1 (accessed April 24, 2012).

[169] Jim Frederick, *Black Hearts: One Platoon's Descent into Madness in Iraq's Triangle of Death*, (New York: Broadway Paperbacks, 2010), xv.

orders that amounted to "save the day." 1-502 PIR's specific tasks were to retake the insurgent strongholds throughout their sector, promote local reconciliation and reconstruction, and train local Iraqi Army units.[170]

The large land area, the dispersed, hostile population, and the entrenched insurgency in Mahmudiyah led to confusion at all levels of this unit between the missions of capturing/killing insurgents and securing the population. This was a tension that was never resolved. The battalion occupied small outposts, but these were not the same as the strongly held Tal 'Afar stability outposts or the offensive firebases of Ramadi. The 1-502 PIR outpost plan suffered from over-dispersion with platoons spread thinly at static, exposed checkpoints that immobilized the unit by the sheer number of locations and subsequent manpower requirements needed to man them. It was from one of these isolated checkpoints that four U.S. soldiers slipped away to commit their crimes in March 2006.[171]

This battalion was spread dangerously thin and faced daily rocket and mortar attacks on their camps, small arms ambushes nearly every other day, and encountered over 900 improvised explosive devices. The battalion lost 21 soldiers killed in action, many more wounded, and over 40 percent of the battalion was treated for mental health problems during the tour.[172] Frederick characterizes the battalion command as utterly dysfunctional. The company commanders did not get along with the battalion commander and particularly Bravo Company –the most dispersed Company and the unit

[170] Ibid., xvi.

[171] At another checkpoint in June, a single humvee securing an isolated bridge was overrun by insurgents with one soldier dying in the fight and two others being dragged away, tortured, and executed. Ibid.

[172] Ibid.

of the four war criminals- felt isolated physically and emotionally from its sister units and its parent command. Overall, the unit had extremely poor relations with the Iraqis who felt the U.S. soldiers were violent and arrogant, while the U.S. soldiers believed that nearly all Iraqis were the enemy.[173]

In contrast to the case of Colonel Steele, where one commander's philosophy of war directly contributed to war crimes, the case of the collapse of discipline within this battalion was a direct result of the impossible task that it was given. Isolated, among an extremely hostile population, this unit was stretched to the breaking point and discipline collapsed, resulting in one of the worst war crimes of the Iraq War and a strategic defeat for the U.S. The poor command climate that Frederick clearly illustrated did not help, but the chronic lack of resources, lack of manpower, and lack of appropriate tactics created an unbridgeable rift between the soldiers of this battalion and the people that they were intended to secure. While it is debatable whether or not the commanders of this battalion could have achieved results similar to the 3rd ACR or 1/1AD, this unit suffered from a task that was simply too large and difficult to accomplish. Even though the 1-502 PIR used methods that were similar to elements of the Tal 'Afar and Ramadi campaigns, overall, they engaged in non-progressive adaptation that was an organizational regression from their division's successful adaptation in the 2003 Mosul campaign.

[173] Ibid., xx, 2.

Escalation of Violence

The case of the 1st Battalion, 26th Infantry Regiment from the 1st Infantry Division in Germany shows the long-term impact of the dissonance created at the tactical level by the Transition strategy. 1-26 IN, known as the Blue Spaders, moved into Baghdad in the midst of the failing Operation Together Forward in August 2006. In contrast to the dysfunctions of the command group of 1-502 PIR in Mahmudiyah, 1-26 IN was a tight-knit battalion with an extremely well respected and experienced commander.[174] The Blue Spaders were assigned the Sunni stronghold of Adhamiyah district on the eastern banks of the Tigris River where the locals were openly hostile to the U.S. forces and the Shia-dominated Iraqi Security Forces.[175]

The soldiers of 1-26 IN occupied one combat outpost in Adhamiyah while the rest of the battalion lived on large FOBs southeast of their sectors. The battalion lost 11 soldiers killed in action by explosively formed penetrator (EFP) IEDs simply travelling from their FOBs to their neighborhoods. The battalion faced a range of challenges: its Battalion Commander lost his 15 year old son to a heart attack in Germany and did not return to the battalion, convoys were regularly hit by IEDs, the battalion's area was a

[174] Lieutenant Colonel Eric Schacht also commanded the battalion in its year-long deployment in Samarra in 2004. Robinson, 181-182.

[175] This section is drawn from Linda Robinson's *Tell Me How This Ends*, Kelley Kennedy's *They Fought for Each Other* and the author's personal experience with this battalion. While there is a fairly common and ignoble army tradition of disparaging the unit that preceded you in Iraq, I will attempt to avoid such pitfalls here. I served as a troop commander in 3-7 Cavalry squadron –which relieved 1-26 IN in Adhamiyah- and I had significant interactions with officers and soldiers of 1-26's Alpha, Bravo (a tank company attached to this battalion from 1st Battalion, 77th Armor Regiment), and Headquarters companies. I assumed command of District Joint Security Station Adhamiyah from one of their officers and I observed a large 1-26 battalion clearing operation with the Iraqi Army. When I reference something that is solely drawn from my own experience with this unit, I will cite it as such in a footnote.

complex mix of Sunni insurgent strongholds, JAM-owned neighborhoods, and mixed-sect battlegrounds.[176]

By the beginning of the surge in February 2007, 1-26 IN added the occupation of small Joint Security Station outposts and the construction of the controversial Adhamiyah wall project to its missions. Once the wall was completed and Iraqi Army soldiers controlled the two main entry points, Sunni fighters were no longer able to target Shia in other neighborhoods and turned their attention to fighting the army inside of the wall. In the space of a few weeks the Blue Spaders lost two 30 ton Bradley Fighting Vehicles and their crews to homemade explosives packed under the roads of the neighborhoods. The second Bradley lost on June 21, 2007 was a breaking point for this battalion. During one day a Bradley Fighting Vehicle, its crew of four, and an Iraqi interpreter were lost, a rocket propelled grenade (RPG) attack on the security perimeter around the Bradley killed an MP, and the Battalion Chaplain's humvee was hit by an IED, wounding three. This was also the day that the Battalion Commander was informed of his son's death in Germany and left the battalion. [177]

The events of June 21st combined with the accumulated strain of the entire deployment led to what reporter Kelly Kennedy described as a "mutiny" in one of the battalion's infantry platoons. These soldiers and their NCO leadership refused to conduct

[176] The battalion would move to FOB Taji on the north side of Baghdad in effort to utilize safer routes and by late 2006 1-26 was spread amongst COP Apache, COP Old MoD (short for Ministry of Defense) and FOB Taji. Robinson, 188-198.

[177] The Blue Spaders occupied two JSSs, one at a local police station in Siluekh and one at a district police station in the heart of old Adhamiyah; both attracted regular insurgent mortar attacks and several direct fire attacks. The Adhamiyah wall, or "safe neighborhood" project was an effort to curtail the sectarian violence in different parts of Baghdad by literally separating majority Sunni neighborhoods from Shia neighborhoods with interlocking 12 foot tall concrete barriers. During the final phases of the construction of the wall in spring 2007 the 1-26's Brigade Commander from the 2nd Brigade, 82nd Airborne Division was shot by a sniper in the groin and nearly killed. Robinson 186-188; and Kennedy, 234, 239-240, 244, 251.

a patrol from Camp Taji to Adhamiyah. This mutiny resulted in all of the squad leaders in the platoon being reassigned and new leadership being brought in to take over.[178] This mutiny and the battalion's overall tactical approach demonstrated that by the spring of 2007 this unit was fully isolated from the population and ineffective at quelling the insurgency. By this point most soldiers in the Blue Spaders hated Iraqis, only patrolled in heavily armored vehicles, were as a group extremely fatalistic about their individual prospects for survival, were very aggressive with civilians, and showed clear signs of exhaustion.[179]

The change associated with the surge was not simply a switch to be thrown that immediately changed everything in the Iraq War. Units whose tours straddled the Casey and Petraeus eras had difficulty adapting to the shift in approach.[180] The men of the Blue Spaders were not evil or war criminals, they were simply exhausted from occupying too large an area, with too few troops, and experiencing too many casualties. The loss of comrades is difficult for soldiers to endure, but it is even more corrosive when significant losses are sustained to little purpose - just trying to get from their camps to their highly volatile area of operations.

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[178] Kennedy, 251, 267-275.

[179] Robinson, 210-212.; and Kennedy, 260. The author participated in a joint patrol with A Company and met First Sergeant McKinney several days before he committed suicide while on patrol. The author conducted patrols with 1-26 IN soldiers who removed their body armor once in their vehicles and did not use standard counter-IED driving techniques –such as avoiding potholes, etc. When asked by the author why they did this, officers, NCOs, and soldiers responded that there was nothing to be done to prevent death from an IED. During a battalion clearing operation I observed soldiers destroy property, ripping down gates outside of homes, on the flimsiest of pretexts: a soldier knocked once then attached a steel cable to the door to rip it down. I observed very loose fire discipline, as soldiers would use large caliber weapons -.50 caliber machine guns and in one case the 25mm cannon of a Bradley- to conduct warning shots and "check" a pothole for an IED. Finally, many soldiers and NCOs told me that every Sunni in the district was a terrorist.

[180] See also an impassioned Op-Ed by several non-commissioned officers from the 82nd Airborne division: Jayamaha Buddhika, Wesley D. Smith, Jeremy Roebuck, Omar Mora, Edward Sandmeier, Yance T. Gray, and Jeremy A. Murphy, "OP-ED Contributors: The War As We Saw It," August, 2007, *New York Times.*

Because of the difficult challenges it faced,[181] 1-26 IN allowed the insurgency to effectively separate them from the population; reversing the counterinsurgent's imperative to separate the insurgent from the people. The lack of resources, manpower, and consolidation on large FOBs drove the Blue Spaders to augment their lack of numbers with armor, firepower, and aggression. The high level of enemy contact and the hostility of the locals drove the battalion to first patrol mostly in humvees and then as insurgent attacks intensified, they patrolled in Bradleys. The cycle of violence and mistrust escalated with each new attack. At each point of escalation, 1-26 IN moved further from mutual identification and understanding with the populace. As the Americans appeared more and more like wanton, faceless occupiers, the local Iraqis were less likely to assist them against the insurgency.[182]

Risk Aversion

The consolidation of U.S. forces on large, fortified Forward Operating Bases that occurred throughout Iraq from 2004 and into 2006 had the opposite effect on the insurgency from the one intended. Conceived as a way to both remove the appearance of an occupation and limit U.S. casualties, this plan enabled the insurgents and militias to seize control of large areas of Iraq. The precipitous withdrawal of U.S. forces exposed the ill-prepared ISF as either hopelessly incompetent or thoroughly penetrated by militias. Additionally, U.S. forces cut themselves off from accurate local intelligence and were

[181] Near the end of their fifteen months in Bagdad the battalion sustained 122 soldiers wounded and 35 soldiers killed in action. This casualty rate was fully three times the rate from the Blue Spaders' tour in Samarra in 2004 and the highest casualty rate for a U.S. Army battalion since the Vietnam War. Robinson related a sergeant expressing widely held frustration with Iraqis and their mission: "This [Adhamiyah] is a trash pile that needs to be blown up" and "All the Surge means is that there are more of us for them to kill" Robinson, 210.

[182] Robinson, 198-210.

slow to realize the changing nature of the war from an insurgency to a sectarian civil war. Journalist George Packer characterized the FOBs in 2006 as both a statement by the army "that counterinsurgency is just too hard" and as a suggestion of "American irrelevance" in the Iraq War.[183]

At the tactical level, FOBs had a way of incentivizing passivity and risk aversion. Designed to protect soldiers, the FOBs increased their risk to IED attack since all routes in and out of the FOB were highly predictable. It also introduced predictability into the timing of patrols since most revolved around breakfast, lunch, and dinner service at the massive contractor-run dining facilities. They were also a drain on time, supplies, personnel, and initiative. Large FOBs required extensive supply convoys from Kuwait to travel on major routes which required IED clearance and security. FOBs were located on the periphery of most population centers and many units had long transit times to reach their sectors. FOBs sapped valuable manpower from combat units for security and other "FOB taxes." Finally, FOBs robbed tactical units of the initiative in the war. Force protection of their own personnel became the overriding concern for many as U.S. fortunes continued to decline in the Iraq War. Thus protection of U.S. soldiers, not the population, became the highest priority of the Transition strategy. The unintended consequence of this concern with force protection was the paradox of where to draw the line between protecting the force and accomplishing the mission. Taken to its logical extreme, the best course of action was not to conduct any risky or dangerous mission, or even to not patrol at all.

[183] Packer, 57.

In 2006 a military police company commander was interviewed by a *New York Times* journalist in South Baghdad. Captain Stephanie Bagley was a West Point graduate and a member of a family of military officers. Initially, she stated that she was optimistic about her mission to train and assist local Iraqi Police in establishing security, but rising sectarian violence, militia assassinations of police officers, and the failure of U.S. security operations left her exhausted. Captain Bagley stated that, "I just want to get everyone home…I'm just not willing to lose another soldier." She banned foot patrols in dangerous neighborhoods by her troops and restricted travel off of the FOB to essential missions only.[184] Captain Bagley described her tour from December 2005 to December 2006 as, "a frustrating year…We all want to get out of here."[185]

These are common, if underreported, sentiments from a commander in Iraq during this time period. Many commanders were concerned with "getting all of their men home alive," but few would go so far as to publicly admit defeat or that one was just playing for time until redeployment. Captain Bagley's statements demonstrated a capable and motivated commander deciding that the risks to her troops' safety posed by a deteriorating security situation outweighed the need to accomplish the mission. By declaring dangerous neighborhoods off limits, she was essentially ceding territory to the insurgency. This is not to say that this commander was a coward or negligent, but that she was simply trying to mediate what she saw as the contradictory requirements of her

[184] Kirk Semple, "A Captain's Journey From Hope To Just Getting Her Unit Home," *New York Times*, November 19, 2006, http://www.nytimes.com/2006/11/19/world/middleeast/19captain.html?pagewanted=all (accessed March 20, 2012), 1.

[185] Ibid., 4.

mission: train the Iraqi Security Forces or protect her own troops. It is clear from this example that she chose the latter.

A widespread impression among junior officers in 2005 and 2006 was that many U.S. commanders, even at the highest levels, were more concerned with force protection than winning; just trying to get through their tours without making waves. In *The Gamble*, Tom Ricks quoted a young U.S. officer, Captain Zachary Martin, who described U.S. posture in 2006 as, "reactive…With our fortified bases and our few secured major supply routes linking them, we have immobilized ourselves and cut ourselves off from the battlefield –the populace of Iraq."[186] A field grade officer and Iraq veteran cited "personal experience" in the Small Wars Journal Council that he knew of, "units that work[ed] deals with the insurgents. 'We won't leave the FOB as long as you do not rocket or mortar our FOB.' Yes this did happen and it took 90-120 days for someone to figure out that this was taking place."[187]

It is not clear from the evidence available that the event described above was a widespread occurrence, however, it was perceived as widespread among many officers with service in Iraq. What is clear is that many officers, like Captain Bagley, simply ceded territory to the insurgency because of danger, lack of troops, or inability to provide an enduring security presence in their sectors. The brigade commander who preceded Colonel MacFarland's 1/1 AD was clear that he did not have the capability to establish control over large parts of Ramadi. In fact, this colonel and other marine officers familiar

[186] Ricks, *The Gamble*, 34.

[187] ODB [pseud.], comment on "Lessons from Iraq: an Infantry PL's Thoughts on OIF Ops," The Small Wars Journal Council forum, comment posted April 14, 2008, http://council.smallwarsjournal.com/showthread.php?t=5249 (accessed March 22, 2012).

with Ramadi counseled Colonel MacFarland to avoid certain areas of the city because the insurgents controlled them outright.[188] The National Guard unit that the 1-502 PIR replaced in Mahmudiyah did not patrol widely outside of the central villages during most of its deployment either.[189] As the Iraq War continued and commanders grappled with the contradictions of the Transition strategy, many "voted with their feet" and avoided dangerous or risky tactics even if they were essential to mission accomplishment.

Tal 'Afar Revisited: Unreinforced Success

The 3rd ACR's campaign to retake Tal 'Afar was a much heralded success in the Iraq War. McMaster's campaign was cited by President Bush in a March 2006 speech as evidence of progress and inspired Secretary of State Condoleeza Rice's description of U.S. strategy in Iraq as "Clear, Hold, Build"[190] in U.S. Senate testimony. While publicly lauded by Multi-National Forces-Iraq commander, General George Casey, it was privately a point of contention for both Casey and Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld; neither of them fully supported a "Clear, Hold, Build" conception. Their desire was for an immediate transition to Iraqi control and rapid U.S. withdrawal.[191]

General Casey personally awarded Colonel McMaster a Bronze Star Medal for his success in Tal 'Afar, an honor that he reserved only for his top commanders. Journalists David Cloud and Greg Jaffe reported that after the award ceremony, in a short

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[188] Michaels, 52.

[189] Frederick, 48.

[190] A variation on General Creighton Abrams security conception in the late Vietnam War: *Clear*-U.S. and Iraqi forces clear areas of insurgents, *Hold*-U.S. and Iraqi forces maintain enduring presence in cleared areas, and *Build*-U.S. and Iraqi forces conduct humanitarian aid and reconstruction, followed by transition to sole Iraqi control.

[191] Ricks, *Fiasco*, 421; and Cloud and Jaffe, 208.

private meeting between the two officers, that Casey congratulated McMaster on his success, but counseled him to be a better team player and learn to "take no for an answer" from his superiors. This was in reaction to tension between McMaster and General Casey's headquarters over unfilled troop requests and resistance to McMaster's tactics. The message was clear: McMaster's campaign was successful, but its tactics would not be replicated or translated into a larger strategic success.[192]

As Tom Ricks observed in 2006, "McMaster's approach in Tal 'Afar would prove to be yet another road not taken…much of the U.S. military in Iraq was pursuing a different course. Instead of living among the people…they were closing smaller outposts and withdrawing to a handful of big super FOBs."[193] An army officer described the impact of U.S. withdrawal from the city of Samarra in late 2005: "the junior officers were left scratching their heads…as to why they fought for a year to restore some level of normalcy to the city only to leave and hand it back over to terrorists and insurgents." he continued, "That was the joy of the FOB consolidation strategy…Let's not secure the population. Let's wall ourselves into these giant concrete garrison paradises, shop at the PX, and eat at Pizza Hut."[194] Another officer criticized the "utter lack of a strategic plan under Casey and Abizaid. He stated that while McMaster and the 3rd ACR were implementing the Tal 'Afar plan in 2005 …the overall strategic thrust of the U.S. Army in Iraq was withdrawal to FOBs."[195] Former brigade commander and Petraeus aide,

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[192] Ibid., 206-207.

[193] Ricks, *Fiasco*, 424.

[194] Schmedlap [pseud.], comment on "Counterinsurgency, Denial, and Iraq," The Small Wars Journal Council forum posted April 15, 2008, http://smallwarsjournal.com/showthread.php?t=4428 (accessed March 22, 2012).

Colonel Peter Mansoor, observed that the "lack of a coherent campaign plan left division and brigade combat team commanders to fashion their own solutions to the tactical challenges they faced" with most adapting to the chaos by using, "offensive operations in a vain attempt to destroy the growing insurgency."[196]

Lieutenant Colonel Gibson,[197] an infantry battalion commander attached to McMaster's 3rd ACR, critiqued the entire Casey strategy in a 2006 *Military Review* article. Based upon his experiences in Tal 'Afar he stated that: "We need an integrated strategy that effectively ties together military, political/institutional, economic, and social lines of operation and that has identifiable, pragmatic steps and milestones. And we need one soon. Considering what is at stake, we must not fail." Under 3rd ACR, his men lived in dispersed outposts and were a constant feature of their neighborhoods rather than being consolidated on large FOBs. Gibson believed that he had found an effective tactical model in the Tal 'Afar campaign, but that the U.S. desperately needed an associated strategy for success at the highest political and military levels.[198]

McMaster's success in Tal 'Afar was based on a nearly point-by-point refutation of Casey's master plan of FOB consolidation and rapid transfer of security responsibility to the Iraqis. 3rd ACR determined that these measures would have failed because FOBs prevented true population security and independent Iraqi Security Forces increased

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[195] Tequila [pseud.], comment on "Ramadi Revisted; Cracks in Jihad," The Small Wars Journal Council forum posted May 1, 2007, http://smallwarsjournal.com/showthread.php?t=140 (accessed March 22, 2012).

[196] Mansoor, "Army," 79.

[197] Lieutenant Colonel Chris Gibson commanded the 2nd Battalion of the 325th Parachute Infantry Regiment (2-325 IN) in the 82nd Airborne Division and was attached to McMaster's 3rd ACR in 2005 for stability operations in the Surrai district.

[198] Chris Gibson, "Battlefield Victories and Strategic Success: The Path Forward in Iraq," *Military Review* 86, no. 5 (September-October 2006).

insecurity due to their actual, and perceived, sectarian partisanship. Whether anyone at Multi National Forces-Iraq headquarters appreciated how much the 3rd ACR's Tal 'Afar campaign revealed the flaws in its Iraq War strategy is unclear. What is clear is that despite the fame of this victory and its national level visibility, the success of Operation Restoring Rights remained an unexamined, unreinforced, and isolated success amid the declining fortunes of the overall Iraq War effort. Despite the success of McMaster's innovative campaign, its long term impact on the war was minimal. Without the reinforcement of local tactical innovation by General Casey's command, substantial change in the war was impossible.

D. The Institutional Disconnect

Augmenting the variation in tactical unit responses to the challenges of the Iraq War was the response of the institutional army, based in the U.S., to the challenges of the war. Rather than engaging in progressive innovation, many senior leaders of the institutional army retrenched into the established tenets of the post Vietnam narrative, effectively ignoring the Iraq War. A review of articles and the introductory columns of the *Armor* journal[199] from 2005 until 2007[200] provides a specific and vivid example of the

[199] The *Armor Journal* is the official professional journal of the U.S. Army armor and cavalry communities (Armor is one of two army branches tasked with direct fire confrontation with the enemy, the other being the much larger infantry branch). The period from 2005 until 2008 was primarily the tenure of two commanding generals of the Armor Center, Major Generals Terry L. Tucker and Robert M. Williams. These generals were institutional commanders of a specific combat specialty community so a level of branch advocacy -or less generously of parochialism- is to be expected. However, the degree to which these generals seemingly ignored the demands of an active war is curious. General officers are supposed to be strategic thinkers, but the Armor Center is a tactically focused command; concerned with training, equipping and education armor and cavalry units as well as soldiers and officers. Neither is it a combat or operational command, as it does not control deployable units. Also, the amount of effort that these generals dedicated to arguing the continued efficacy of the tank in war seems unnecessary since the overwhelming majority of *Armor* readers are themselves armor officers and soldiers and are well indoctrinated in the utility of their own specialty.

disconnect between senior institutional army leaders and the junior officer veterans of the war in Iraq. Rather than focus on innovations and adaptations required for the Iraq War, commanding generals of the Armor Center were more concerned with internal army bureaucratic politics over Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld's "Transformation" reforms, funding for major armor weapons systems, and in the surge era, the narrative of lost armor "core competencies."

The Armor Center generals seemed painfully slow to adapt from a Cold War mindset and were overwhelmingly concerned with lost professional competencies -tank gunnery and large scale mechanized combat- during an active war needing very few of these skills. In the midst of actual, ongoing wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, these officers were more concerned with potentially losing a high-intensity battle to an unidentified state military, rather than prevailing in the current conflicts. With the Iraq War as the main theater of operation for the vast majority of armor and cavalry units and leaders, the high profile of several influential armor officers, and the *Armor* journal's tactical focus, one would expect a rich and detailed treatment of that war and its conduct on the pages of this journal. As an indication of the institutional disconnect, this simply was not the case in *Armor* from 2005 through most of 2007.

In the January/February 2005 issue of *Armor*, Major General Terry Tucker, commanding general of the Armor Center, stated in his introductory column that,

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[200] In the period considered, the armor community mainly deployed to Iraq, with very few units participating in the war in Afghanistan. Several of the most famous counterinsurgency innovators and theorists of this time were armor officers: Lieutenant Colonel John Nagl wrote an influential history of counterinsurgency and was a primary author of General Petraeus' counterinsurgency manual; Colonel Peter Mansoor was another counterinsurgency proponent and senior aide to General Petraeus; Colonel H.R. McMaster was a famous Gulf War veteran, author of a popular history of the Joint Chiefs and Vietnam, and architect of the Tal Afar campaign; and finally, Colonel Sean MacFarland was the commander who retook Ramadi and supported the Anbar Awakening.

"Currently we are engaged in a counterinsurgency campaign…" but then discussed armor's purpose as conventional, mechanized combat. He characterized counterinsurgency as one small part of "full-spectrum warfare"[201] and described in detail the successful use of armor in urban combat in Iraq.[202] Tucker called Afghanistan a light infantry and airpower war while Iraq was a heavy, mechanized war, requiring the use of armor forces. Tucker was primarily concerned, not with the future of the Iraq War, but with the armor branch's future in Secretary Rumsfeld's defense Transformation.[203]

Armor *2005-2006: Army Bureaucratic Politics*

General Tucker introduced the March/April 2005 *Armor* journal stating that, "Transformation is in full swing…" and then outlined ongoing conventional force structure changes,[204] making no mention of irregular or counterinsurgency skills needed for the armor force in Iraq. The Iraq War was characterized as a distraction from the important work of modernization under defense Transformation, and that the pace of this "reform" would be slowed by operational needs in Iraq. Tucker still adhered to the assumption that the occupation of Iraq would be a brief affair requiring limited adjustments from the army's core purpose of conventional combat.[205]

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[201] An army doctrinal concept from Field Manual 3-0, *Operations*, used to describe war as composed of offense, defense, and stability and support operations.

[202] Referring to tanks and Bradleys engaging in direct combat in the 2003 invasion of Iraq and the 2004 battles in Najaf, Fallujah, and Sadr City.

[203] This issue of *Armor* featured no articles on low intensity conflict, counterinsurgency, or small wars; the focus was on the invasion of Iraq, general military history, and Transformation. *Armor*, (January/February 2005), 4.

[204] The adoption of modular brigade combat team organization and new tanks for the 2nd Armored Cavalry Regiment.

Differing from General Tucker, was Captain Jason Pape's "Winning with the People in Iraq."[206] Pape discussed the challenges a conventionally armed, equipped, and trained tank company faced as a "landowning" area security force in Northern Baghdad. Pape stated that, "We had not trained for this mission. We prepared almost exclusively for combat operations." a complaint that would be echoed by other junior officers in the pages of *Armor*. He discussed the keys to success in this mission as: 1. finding effective local leaders, 2. building relationships with the community, and 3. separating the insurgents from the local population through careful targeting.[207] Tucker focused on preparing the armor force for future war that looked very similar to wars of the past, while Pape described the pressing need to adopt skills for the current war that were a radical departure from standard armor training and skills.

First Lieutenant Barry A. Naum echoed Pape's criticisms over the lack of relevant training for Iraq. He argued that active and National Guard forces "have been called to accomplish missions well outside their military occupational specialties and training."[208] The new Armor Center commander, Major General Williams, continued General Tucker's conception of the transitory nature of the Iraq War and the enduring need to prepare for future war based on "Transformation." The Iraq War was rarely referenced by name, it was usually called, "today's operational challenges" or the "contemporary

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[205] *Armor,* (January/February 2005), 4.

[206] Among the first articles in *Armor* specifically about counterinsurgency and the only article in this issue on Iraq that isn't about combat, logistics, or organization.

[207] *Armor,* (January/February 2005), 35.

[208] *Armor,* (November/December 2005), 13.

operating environment," and when referred to at all the wars were consistently described as distractions from force modernization.[209]

In his May/June 2005 column entitled, "Heavy Armor: The Core of Urban Combat" General Tucker argued that recent urban combat modifications made tanks, rather than light infantry, the premier urban combat tool.[210] General Tucker extolled the virtue of the tank in urban combat while urban combat veteran Captain Raed Gyek questioned the assumptions of senior institutional leaders in "Back to the Future: A Company Commander's Perspective on Transformation." Gyek argued that,

> War is much more than targeting objects[211]…For soldiers who have spent one day fighting in the streets of Al Qa'im, Husaybah, or Fallujah, and the next day delivering humanitarian aid or reconstruction aid along the same streets, this simplistic assumption seems blatantly foolish. These are not situations that lend themselves to being easily categorized, patterned, analyzed, predicted, and targeted."[212]

The contrast between Tucker, a general with more than 25 years of service, and Gyek, a captain with no more than ten, couldn't be starker. Tucker offered a simplistic, high-technology vision of war where the application of firepower secured victory, while Gyek offered an eloquent repudiation of transformation with his description of the complexity, uncertainty, and ambiguity of modern war requiring the utmost flexibility and discrimination. Here the traditional roles of a young, tactically-oriented officer with a

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[209] *Armor*, (January/February 2006), 4.

[210] *Armor*, (May/June 2005), 4.

[211] The use of sensors and digital communications to remove "the fog of war" and thus reveal enemy locations and assets that can then be struck by precision munitions was a core assumption of much of the Revolution in Military Affairs and Transformation thinking.

[212] *Armor*, (May/June 2005), 22.

narrow view of war and an experienced, strategic-minded general with a nuanced view of war were clearly reversed.

In the March/April 2006 issue Williams introduced a compendium of the "best" Iraq War entries to the journal. Nowhere to be found was Captain Pape's prescient description of population security and new training methodologies for counterinsurgency war. However, traditional combat was well represented by articles on the initial ground invasion of Iraq, the 2004 Battle of Sadr City, and the Battle of Najaf. Various other articles focused on narrow technical aspects of combat, such as techniques and force structure. These "Contemporary Lessons Learned" from the institution focused overwhelmingly on "kinetic" combat skills and ignored the more nuanced lessons of Pape, Gyek, and Naum.[213] General Williams dedicated another issue of *Armor* a year later to the "great" articles of the past, from World War I to Operation Iraqi Freedom. This issue included two articles on Iraq: one on the initial invasion, one on the battles of 2004, and again featuring none on counterinsurgency. Williams argued that the Iraq War had "proved" the efficacy of heavy armor and justified extending the service life of the M1 main battle tank past 2050.[214]

In the May/June 2006 *Armor* journal, General Williams made the first substantive reference to counterinsurgency by an Armor Center commander since the beginning of the Iraq War. He provided a rebuttal to former Australian Army officer and counterinsurgency expert, David Kilcullen's criticism of the army's overreliance on

[213] *Armor*, (March/April 2006), 4.

[214] *Armor*, (March/April 2007), 4, 20.

armored vehicle patrols in his article "28 Articles of Counterinsurgency."[215] Williams argued that, "Without a doubt, his ideas have much merit, but armored vehicles still have an important role to play…Many of us who served in the Balkans during the 1990s recall the sudden calming effect the presence of an Abrams tank made on an unruly mob."[216] In the following month's issue Williams continued, "In today's operating environment, the tank remains the platform of choice…Its shock effect, intimidation, and firepower make it a key component in fighting the insurgency."[217]

These two passages are rich with subtext and deserve to be unpacked. First, it is difficult to relate how much a 1990s Kosovo "war story" from a general would infuriate most junior officers in 2006. The lessons of Kosovo for the Iraq War had long expired by this point and a more obvious indication of "tone deafness" by an army senior leader is hard to imagine. Furthermore, as many junior officers learned in Iraq and observed in *Armor*, the indiscriminate use of tanks and firepower in Iraq had the potential to escalate the level of violence rather than quelling it. More violence required more tanks, creating a spiral of instability. These contradictory lessons on the use of force were clearly not comprehended by the Armor Center leaders. The overriding concerns of Generals

[215] Kilcullen referred to armored humvees as "urban submarines" that simultaneously dehumanized American soldiers and isolated the Iraqi people from U.S. forces depriving them of access to intelligence.

[216] *Armor*, (May/June 2006), 5.

[217] *Armor,* (September/October 2006), 4. Williams interpreted Kilcullen's argument as an indictment of the utility of the tank in war, which it certainly is not. Kilcullen simply argued that patrolling from remote bases solely in armored vehicles created an unbridgeable gulf between the local population and the U.S. Army. When viewed from a tank, an urban area is a frightening place, full of hiding places, ambushes and IEDs. When viewed by an Iraqi civilian, a tank is monstrous, destructive and reviled machine of a heartless occupier. Thus both soldier and civilian are dehumanized to one another and violence between the two can be more easily rationalized as destroying a hateful "machine" or destroying a "target." As Major S. Leslie argued, "As long as we continue to 'button up' [close all hatches on a tank for safety] and remain secluded from the local populace, we will need more and more armored vehicles." From *Armor,* (July/August 2007), 3.

Williams and Tucker seemed to be bureaucratic political advantage against the infantry branch, and the survival of specific weapons systems in the defense budget. The gulf between the institutional leadership of the armor branch and many young officer veterans of Iraq couldn't have been wider in 2006.

Armor *2007: Lost "Core Competencies"*

At what might be termed the moment of decision in the Iraq War, February 2007, Major General Williams opened the January/February 2007 with a question, "What can we do to stop the degradation of our core competencies?" Williams established within the armor branch a conservative narrative that had been coalescing around an assumption that tactical "adaptations" in Iraq had blunted the sharp fighting edge of the conventional army. Williams continued,

> While I fully understand the requirements for training the Armor Branch to fight the current enemy, we cannot forget that we must always be prepared to engage and destroy the enemy in offensive and defensive operations…This issue…highlight[s] lessons learned by the Israeli Defense Forces in its most recent conflict with Hezbollah[the 2006 Israeli-Hezbollah War]"[218]

Also featured in this issue was an article coauthored by prominent counterinsurgency advocate, Lieutenant Colonel John Nagl.[219] Significantly, the first issue of *Armor* featuring one of the armor community's most famous counterinsurgency experts, and in the midst of the desperate conditions of the surge, centered on the lessons of the Israel-Hezbollah War. This issue presented a contradictory message to the armor community. At a critical juncture in the Iraq War, with the issue very much in doubt, the

[218] *Armor*, (January/February 2007), 4. The cover of this issue featured an Israeli Defense Force Merkava tank under attack from a Hezbollah anti-tank guided missile (ATGM).

[219] *Armor*, (January/February 2007), 15-17.

Armor Center commander seemed to argue against the new Petraeus strategy in Iraq. The received wisdom of the Israel-Hezbollah War was that Israeli tankers paid a high price in a short, violent high-intensity fight for their recent focus on "COIN" in the Palestinian occupied territories: "the IDF's experience demonstrates the need to retain core combat skills even as the United States takes on anti-terrorist missions in Iraq and Afghanistan." The Nagl article on training methods for the current Iraq War was placed after the Israel-Hezbollah War article and was not even mentioned by General Williams. The institutional message seemed clear: too much attention on counterinsurgency tactics could lead to catastrophic defeat in a "real" war as experienced by the Israelis.[220]

As the shift in tactics and strategy in Iraq finally began to reduce violence and reclaim insurgent dominated areas, several authors emphasized the need to accept the realities of the Iraq War: "Counterinsurgency may not be the fight we want, but it's the fight we have."[221] and that, "Counterinsurgency is difficult. As a force, we have only begun to rediscover and process the hard lessons of the past, which we largely discarded in our march to build the perfect maneuver and combat force."[222] As these officers discussed the difficult cultural adaptations required by the army for success in Iraq, General Williams asked in his column, "What will your next tank look like?"[223] In the midst of the surge, one of the pivotal wartime events in recent U.S. military history, a

[220] *Armor,* (January/February 2007), 4. Perhaps replicating General William DePuy's use of the 1973 October War between Israel and its Arab neighbors to validate his post Vietnam "Active Defense" doctrine, Major General Williams was trying to use this modern Israeli war to validate his own argument about the importance of conventional armor forces.

[221] *Armor,* (July/August 2007), 7.

[222] *Armor,* (July/August 2007), 26.

[223] *Armor,* (July/August 2007), 4.

turning point on the level of the Tet Offensive in Vietnam, General Williams wanted to open up a debate over the design of the next main battle tank. As the previous officers observed the army's cultural aversion to counterinsurgency and its pressing need to adapt, both Generals Tucker and Williams consistently demonstrated vastly different priorities. Both generals focused on concerns for bureaucratic politics, program budgeting, and adhered to a vision of high-intensity war that many junior officers did not share.

The institutional concerns of these generals were not in any way echoed by two of the armor branch's premier Iraq War innovators: Colonels H.R. McMaster and Sean MacFarland. Neither officer, nor many others featured in *Armor,* asked for a better tank or more machine guns.[224] Junior officers like Pape, Gyek, Naum, and Nagl did ask for better training to prepare soldiers for Iraq. Despite the oft heard refrain, "we were not trained for this mission," preparation for the Iraq War was never systematically addressed by the Armor Center commanders in the pages of this journal.[225] The institutional army lagged behind the needs of the operational army in Iraq and *Armor* issues from the 2005 to 2007 illustrated this institutional disconnect. The leaders of the armor branch clung to an intellectual framework based upon the post Vietnam narrative that had little relevance to junior officers for the war in Iraq. The disconnect revealed a failure by many general

[224] Generals Tucker and Williams never mentioned McMaster or MacFarland or any other prominent Iraq War innovators by name in the pages of *Armor*.

[225] Training is clearly within the purview of the Armor Center since it trains armor and cavalry soldiers, educates noncommissioned officers and officers, and generates armor and cavalry doctrine. However, training for Iraq was only tangentially addressed in *Armor* by these generals, and usually only by its negative impact on Transformation, delaying procuring new weapons systems, or blunting conventional war skills.

officers to conceive of future war, a failure to adapt to the current fight, and a failure to directly grapple with the uncomfortable realities of the Iraq War.

A Field Artillery Officer's Dissent

In May of 2007 the *Armed Forces Journal* published an article entitled, "A Failure in Generalship" by Lieutenant Colonel Paul Yingling.[226] Yingling accused the entire army general officer corps, as a class, of being responsible for defeat in the Iraq War. His charges were two-fold: first, the generals failed to prepare the army for war, and second, the generals failed to advise political leaders on the application of force to achieve policy aims. Yingling drew a parallel between these failures and the failures of generals in the Vietnam War.[227] He charged that, "The intellectual and moral failures common to America's general officer corps in Vietnam and Iraq constitute a crisis in American generalship…" Yingling identified the characteristics of "the generals we need" as intelligence, creativity, and moral, rather than physical, courage.[228]

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[226] In 2007 Yingling was a two-time veteran of the Iraq War, the first time as a field artillery battalion executive officer and the second as Colonel McMaster's deputy commanding officer in the 3rd ACR in Tal Afar. He was waiting to take command of a field artillery battalion at Fort Hood, Texas when this article was published. He was inspired to write this unprecedented statement of discontent with the general officer leadership during the Iraq War while attending a Purple Heart ceremony for some of his soldiers from his previous Iraq tour. He recalled feeling shame for not having done more to force change in the army after being reminded of the price soldiers paid for the failure to adapt.

[227] Lieutenant Colonel Yingling leveled six specific charges against army generals in Iraq: 1. Failure in the 1990s to prepare for likely future war –generals were locked in a Cold War mentality and refused to prepare for low intensity conflicts despite experience during the 90s; 2. Failure in 2002 to estimate "means and ways" to achieve policy aims of the Iraq War; 3. Failure to estimate realistic troop requirements for Iraq; 4. Failure of post-invasion planning in Iraq; 5. Failure to adapt to the requirements of counterinsurgency warfare; and 6. Failure to understand and accurately represent the Iraq War to the Congress and the public. Paul Yingling, "A Failure in Generalship," *Armed Forces Journal* (May 2007) http://www.armedforcesjournal.com/2007/05/2635198 (accessed April 24, 2012).

[228] Additionally, he advocated that Congress become more involved with general officer selection and promotion because the executive branch selects pliant "company men" and senior general officers promote conformist officers with similar career paths to their own. He argued that Congress must hold generals

Journalist Greg Jaffe described Yingling's essay as part of a broader debate within the army that had developed along generational lines pitting young officers with Iraq experience, impatient for change, against older, more conservative generals. With this article Yingling came to be a kind of "cult hero" to many frustrated junior officers.[229] Typical of the comments on the Small Wars Journal Council weblog was an observation that Lieutenant Colonel Yingling was, "only putting to paper what has been said in most every TOC [Tactical Operation Center] and chowhall in the last 4 years." Another officer added,

> It is nearly four years since signs surfaced that we were being handicapped by some of our generalship in Iraq. If we had more of ability for tough, but respectful discourse within the profession, where company and/or field grade officers could offer criticisms of decisions made at the GO [General Officer] level, then maybe we might not be at this point.[230]

The article quickly became a popular topic of discussion around the army, particularly in officer education programs. In August of 2007 Vice Chief of Staff of the Army, General Richard Cody, visited the Armor Captains Career Course at Fort Knox, Kentucky. One of the first questions from the audience of captains, many with Iraq War experience, asked for the general's opinion of Yingling's article. General Cody

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accountable for their performance, because "As matters stand now, a private who loses a rifle suffers far greater consequences than a general who loses a war."

[229] Greg Jaffe, "Narrative Discord - Critiques of Iraq War Reveal Rifts Among Army Officers: Colonel's Essay Draws Rebuttal From General; Captains Losing Faith," *Wall Street Journal*, June 29, 2007, http://online.wsj.com/article/SB118306191403551931.html (accessed April 25, 2012).

[230] These two entries are representative of the vast majority of the responses to Yingling's article on the Small Wars Council forum. This thread was one of the largest on the Iraq War on this website discussion forum. Much of the debate centered, not around the substance of his argument, with which most agreed, but with the ethics of military officer dissent. RTK [pseud.], comment on "Army Officer Accuses Generals of 'Intellectual and Moral Failures'," The Small Wars Journal Council forum posted April 27, 2008 http://council.smallwarsjournal.com/showthread.php?t=2724&highlight=failure+generalship (accessed March 22, 2012).; and Shek [pseud.], comment on "Army Officer Accuses Generals of 'Intellectual and Moral Failures'," The Small Wars Journal Council forum posted April 27, 2008 http://council.smallwarsjournal.com/showthread.php?t=2724&highlight=failure+generalship (accessed March 22, 2012).

responded by turning the question around and asking the captains, "What's your opinion of the general officer corps?" Over the next 90 minutes five different captains stood up and voiced concerns drawn from Yingling's essay to the general. Journalist and author Fred Kaplan observed that, "Fort Knox reflected a brewing conflict between the Army's junior and senior officer corps."[231]

Lieutenant Colonel Yingling gave public voice to the confusion and frustration within the officer corps over the Iraq War. This article was a powerful statement because of the passion it was written with and the extreme professional risk that Paul Yingling assumed by publishing it. Among military officers, Yingling had significant moral authority and legitimacy as an Iraq War veteran who had participated in one of the war's few successes in Tal 'Afar. Additionally, far from being a disgruntled officer who had been passed over for promotion, Yingling risked his pending battalion command and long-term career prospects by publishing this article. Unlike the retired general officers of the 2006 "Revolt of the Generals,"[232] Yingling voiced his dissent while still in uniform and not long after he had secured his pension and his final opportunity for promotion, as many junior officers had criticized the "Revolt of the Generals."[233]

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[231] Fred Kaplan, "Challenging the Generals," *New York Times*, August 26, 2007, http://www.nytimes.com/2007/08/26/magazine/26military-t.html?pagewanted=all (accessed April 25, 2012). Similarly Elizabeth Bumiller reported that the majors school at "Fort Leavenworth has become a frontline in the military's tension and soul searching over Iraq." Mirroring the discussion on the Small Wars Journal Council forum, most majors argued over the appropriate manner in which to voice dissent and not over the substance of Yingling's argument.
Elizabeth Bumiller, "At an Army School for Officers, Blunt Talk about Iraq," *New York Times*, October 14, 2007 http://www.nytimes.com/2007/10/14/us/14army.html?pagewanted=all (accessed April 25, 2012).

[232] Several recently retired generals openly criticized the Iraq War and called for Rumsfeld's resignation. Three of these officers from the army were: Major General Charles Swannack, recent commander of the 82nd Airborne Division; Major General John Baptiste, recent commander of the 1st Infantry Division; and Major General Paul Eaton, recent commander of MNSTC-I.

Many conservative generals reacted defensively to Yingling's argument.[234] Major General John Hammond, a conservative, conventional general led the reactionary charge against Yingling at Fort Hood, Texas. He assembled a large group of junior officers from the 4th Infantry Division to hear his rebuttal of Yingling's argument. Hammond asserted that generals were good men doing the best job possible. He argued that Yingling was not a general officer and therefore unqualified to judge the performance of generals. An unstated corollary to this statement was that no other junior officers were qualified to judge generals either. The captain's who attended this briefing were reportedly unimpressed with Hammond's argument.[235]

A retired major general observed to Fred Kaplan that, "Guys like Yingling…are the canaries in the coal mine of Army reform." his treatment by the service would be interpreted as a verdict by the general officer corps on his argument.[236] In 2008 Yingling's battalion received orders that it would deploy to Iraq without its commander or staff. As the retired general had predicted, this action was widely viewed as a reprisal

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[233] The majority of the officers in the "Revolt of the Generals" had not voiced their concerns about the Iraq War while serving as active commanders. This caused many junior officers to question their motives. Many wondered if the stakes were so high, then why did these officers not dissent strenuously while it still mattered? In recent army history there was no precedent for Yingling's dissent. Rather than blaming political leaders or a fickle public with the failures in Iraq, Yingling's narrative took aim at the army's own governing elite. Kaplan; Bumiller; and Jaffe, "Narrative Discord."

[234] Yingling did not identify any generals by name, but was clearly aiming at the operational commanders of the Iraq War, Generals Franks, Sanchez, and Casey, who had failed to foresee or adapt to the conflict. Yingling's powerful charge that soldiers were punished more for losing equipment than generals who lost wars, was directed at General Casey who had received a "soft landing" promotion out of Iraq to the position of Chief of Staff of the Army. Casey's treatment closely mirrored the treatment of General William Westmoreland when he was fired from Vietnam command by way of a promotion to Chief of Staff of the Army. David Cloud and Greg Jaffe reported from interviews with General Casey that he had received a copy of the article sent by an advisor with a suggestion that he read it. General Casey stated that he began reading, but became so upset by the charge that general officers had failed in the 1990s to prepare for war that he never finished the article. Bush, *Decision Points*, 377.; and Cloud and Jaffe, 252.

[235] Jaffe, "Narrative Discord."

[236] Kaplan.

against Yingling for speaking out against the generals. In Baghdad, General Petraeus learned of Yingling's situation and personally intervened to have these orders rescinded and Yingling subsequently deployed with his men to Iraq.[237]

Yingling took issue with the senior institutional leaders of the army who had failed to commit sufficient effort to preparing for or adapting to, the Iraq War. In a 2006 interview at Fort Leavenworth, he observed the disconnect between the tactical army in Iraq and its institutional leadership in the U.S.: "The institutional army…has not caught up in either professional education or organizational design with the challenges of counterinsurgency [in Iraq].[238] Highlighting the importance of the stakes for which he was arguing, Yingling concluded that:

> Iraq is America's Valmy.[239] American generals have been checked by a form of war that they did not prepare for and that they do not understand. They spent the years following the 1991 Gulf War mastering a system of war without thinking deeply about the ever changing nature of war. They marched into Iraq having assumed without much reflection that the wars of the future would look much the wars of the past.[240]

[237] Cloud and Jaffe, 295.

[238] Yingling, "Interview with LTC Paul Yingling," 15.

[239] Defeat in 1792 of the Prussian army by the peoples' army of revolutionary France. A turning point in European military history where small, professional armies of kings could no longer prevail over the levee en masse of national militaries.

[240] Yingling, "A Failure in Generalship."

E. The Strategic Shift[241]

General David Petraeus

"We were going to do nation building and we weren't going to hold it at arm's length. We were an occupying army, and we had enormous responsibilities for the people."[242]

General David Petraeus' role as the strategic commander of the surge has been well-documented by journalists,[243] but what has not been as well documented is the impact of Petraeus' counterinsurgency doctrine on the U.S. Army as an institution. Petraeus' provided decisive military and political leadership in the Iraq War in 2007, but a significant amount of the power of his leadership was established in 2006 with the unprecedented, in terms of its contents, production, and publicity, formulation of FM 3-24, *Counterinsurgency*. In conjunction with General Keane's efforts at the highest political levels, and General Odierno's efforts at the tactical level, Petraeus initiated a significant change, in not only the war-time practices of the army, but also a challenge to its dominant philosophy.

Petraeus and Doctrine: an "Engine of Change"

Petraeus accomplished this dramatic sea-change in the approach to the Iraq War not solely based on his intellect, strategic vision, or political skills, all of which were considerable, but through the creation of a new intellectual framework to conceptualize the war and guide action. Innovation efforts in the Iraq War were disjointed and

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[241] Metz.

[242] Major General Petraeus, Mosul, Iraq 2003. Cloud and Jaffe, 121.

[243] Thomas Ricks in *The Gamble*, Linda Robinson in *Tell Me How This Ends*, David Cloud and Greg Jaffe's *The Fourth Star*, and in Paula Broadwell's *All In*.

directionless; while some units innovated effectively, others were engaged in non-productive adaptation. In military journals, on weblogs, in officer education programs, and in the field there was much discussion and debate about the proper course for the war, but it lacked a unifying intellectual framework to conceptualize the conflict. Some leaders such as McMaster, embraced effective unconventional methods, and others such as Steele, retrenched into reactionary warfighting approaches. Regardless of approach, no technique achieved long term strategic success. What was missing was not a prescriptive tactical primer for the war, but a comprehensive vision to guide action, that was flexible enough to take advantage of fleeting opportunities and reinforce local tactical successes.

General Petraeus was a conventional army officer that long operated against the cultural grain of his institution. In the 1980s while completing his PhD dissertation at Princeton, he questioned the assumptions of the dominant Weinberger/Powell doctrine. He also studied U.S. counterinsurgency operations in Central America under his mentor General John Galvin when the institutional focus was on the defense of Cold War Europe. He embraced the unpopular peacekeeping missions of the 1990s and even volunteered to serve in Haiti in 1994. As the commander of the 101st Airborne Division in 2003, Petraeus achieved significant success in the immediate post-invasion stabilization of Mosul by explicitly embracing the nation building mission.[244] Petraeus was also unusual among army officers in his sophisticated interactions with the media.[245]

[244] Nation building was a much maligned concept in the uniformed military and by Secretary Rumsfeld. He was deeply involved in political and military tasks and did not accept the "antibody" narrative of General John Abizaid that U.S. forces lacked agency as occupiers.

[245] Petraeus had a high media profile for a U.S. division commander in 2003 and was often compared favorably to the more heavy handed approach of Major General Ray Odierno's 4th Infantry Division in Tikrit. Petraeus was featured on a Newsweek cover story as the "U.S. exit strategy" from Iraq in 2004. Petraeus authored a controversial opinion piece for the Washington Post in 2004 in which he was very

Petraeus headed the Multinational Security Transition Command – Iraq (MNSTC-I) under General Casey and frequently clashed with his superior.[246] In what was widely interpreted as punishment by the army senior leadership for his high media profile and mixed performance as MNSTC-I commander, General Petraeus was assigned to the Fort Leavenworth Combined Arms Center. This command was responsible for elements of training, doctrine, and officer education and its previous commander had been sent there after running afoul of Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld.[247]

Cloud and Jaffe described Petraeus as, "plotting an insurgency of his own, one aimed at changing his service" through the doctrine generating power of his command.[248] General Petraeus viewed the Combined Arms Center as an "engine of change" to make the army more adaptable in facing irregular warfare challenges in Iraq and Afghanistan. In an attempt to address the disconnect between the institutional army and the army deployed in Iraq and Afghanistan, Petraeus embarked on a multipronged assault to improve the service's adaptability. He began by expanding and streamlining the Center for Army Lessons Learned, which collected, analyzed, and redistributed to tactical units the best practices and newest tactics being used throughout the two combat zones. He also ordered the Combat Training Centers to modify their Cold War-based training scenarios to reflect current operations in the Middle East and Central Asia. He changed

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optimistic about the training mission in Iraq. The release of this column was immediately followed by several embarrassing failures by U.S.-trained and equipped Iraqi forces.

[246] The hyperactive Petraeus clashed with the conservative Casey over the situation in Iraq which Petraeus described as a rapidly closing window of opportunity.

[247] Lieutenant General William Wallace's comments to the media during the invasion of Iraq about the U.S. not having been prepared for irregular Iraqi fighters allegedly angered the Defense Secretary. Cloud and Jaffe, 99, 121, 172, 176, 210, 217.; and Ricks, *Fiasco*, 427.

[248] Cloud and Jaffe, 217.

the curricula for officer education to reflect the need for adaptable leaders in irregular environments. Finally, he focused on developing and publishing a revolutionary, in army terms, doctrinal manual by conducting the first thorough revision of U.S. counterinsurgency doctrine in 25 years.[249]

The "Necessary Anomaly" of FM 3-24, Counterinsurgency

General Petraeus established, along with U.S. Marine General James Mattis, a joint, multidisciplinary writing team headed by retired army officer and history professor Conrad Crane. The previous cursory attempt to revise the counterinsurgency manual in 2004 was labored on by a single army officer; the new team was a dynamic mix of army and marine officers with Iraq experience like Lieutenant Colonel John Nagl, and academics such as Johns Hopkins professor Eliot Cohen and Harvard's Carr Center for Human Rights director, Sarah Sewell.[250] General Petraeus was deeply involved in the conceptualization, drafting, and editing of the manual[251] in an unprecedented open and collaborative doctrine writing process.[252] Petraeus intended for his new manual to be a

[249] Crane, "United States," 59.

[250] Cloud and Jaffe, 218.; and Kretchik, 264.

[251] He emphasized the key goal of legitimacy in counterinsurgency based on historical study of British, French, and American counterinsurgency experience and the theories of David Galula's *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice* and Sir Robert Thompson's *Defeating Communist Insurgency: The Lessons of Malaya and Vietnam.*

[252] A well-publicized conference, co-sponsored by the Carr Center for Human Rights, was held in 2006 at Fort Leavenworth to provide suggestions for revision. This conference was an unprecedented happening in the history of U.S. Army doctrinal development. This conference was attended by joint and allied military officers, intelligence agents, diplomats, representatives from academia, the media, non-governmental organizations, human rights campaigners and various critics. The attendees offered significant revisions that were incorporated into the final version. Upon its publication in December of 2006, the counterinsurgency manual again broke new ground for an army doctrinal manual. In an unconventional media blitz, designed in part to circumvent resistance among conservative elements of the military and defense bureaucracy to some of its revolutionary content, members of the writing team were featured on the Charlie Rose program, the Daily Show, a positive book review was published in the New York Times, and

framing argument for the efficacy of counterinsurgency operations and for this doctrinal publication to have the same organizational, material, and philosophical impact as Active Defense and AirLand Battle doctrines of the Cold War had on defining the army philosophy of war.[253]

Since the U.S. was limited in the "acceptable" types of counterinsurgency campaign it could wage by international law, norms on human rights, and global media, a population-centric approach was selected over an enemy-centric, or any other approach that caused intentional, mass civilian suffering.[254] The manual featured a distinct break from past doctrinal focus on high-intensity war, technology, and firepower.[255] The counterinsurgency manual asserted that, "counterinsurgency operations have been neglected in broader American military doctrine…since the end of the Vietnam

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the University of Chicago released a commercial version of the manual. During the first month of the manual's availability on army and marine websites, it was downloaded 1.5 million times. Crane, "United States," 63, 68.; Cloud and Jaffe, 218-220.; Ricks, *The Gamble*, 25.; and Jack Kem, "The U.S. Army's Doctrinal Renaissance," *World Politics Review* Special Report: U.S Military Doctrine after the long War, (November, 2011) http://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/Content/assets/Document/679/WPR_COIN_11012011.pdf (Accessed April 26, 2012), 50.

[253] Cloud and Jaffe, 218.; and Lester Grau, review of *U.S. Army/Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual*, *Military Review* (November-December, 2007), 119.

[254] Mansour, "Army," 77.; Crane, "United States," 77.; and Ricks, *The Gamble*, 24-31.

[255] In *Military Review*, retired lieutenant colonel and Soviet and Afghan War expert Lester Grau offered his analysis of what made the new FM 3-24 *Counterinsurgency* special. He described the manual as prioritizing the protection of civilians over the protection of U.S. forces, "an idea that runs counter to decades of U.S. force-protection policies that came at the price of endangering the civilian populace." He observed that in contrast to recent doctrinal trends, FM 3-24 focused more on politics and economics than the simple use of force. He also stated that the manual argued for greater senior political leader involvement in the conduct of counterinsurgencies as they are not primarily military tasks. This was a significant change from the clear trend in the thinking of senior army leaders that, in light of the failures of the Vietnam War, politicians should be kept out of military tasks as much as possible. This contradicted the philosophy of the Powell doctrine which drew a bright line between peace and war and sought to limit civilian participation in war once it was initiated. Finally, Grau observed that the counterinsurgency manual was nothing less than a rejection of the "American way of war" in that it prioritized manpower over technology and discretion over firepower. Grau, 119.

War…This manual is designed to reverse that trend."[256] It continued that, "Throughout its history, the U.S. military has had to relearn the principles of counterinsurgency (COIN) while conducting operations against adaptive insurgent enemies. It is time to institutionalize Army and Marine Corps knowledge of this longstanding form of conflict."[257] This manual squarely took aim at systemic failures to plan for counterinsurgency war and the failure of the institutional army to internalize the lessons of past counterinsurgent wars. More fundamentally, it was taking issue with the army's dominant interpretation of history over the last 30 years and explicitly criticizing the army's singular focus on high-intensity war to the exclusion of all other types of war.

A Driver of Structural Change

Petraeus' doctrine achieved its greatest impact as a force of structural change within the army institution. By harnessing the power of formal doctrine to influence informal doctrine and common practice, Petraeus leveraged a shift in not only tactics and strategy, but in philosophy. Petraeus addressed both the narrow issue of failure in the Iraq War and the broader issue of the rigid post-Vietnam doctrine system. The publication of the unconventional counterinsurgency doctrine "forced" the institutional army to deal with the war and reconsider long held and unexamined assumptions about warfare in general. The multiple references to the forgotten lessons of Vietnam and the overall tone of the manual, especially the section on "Paradoxes of Counterinsurgency Operations," was a systematic refutation of the lessons of the post Vietnam era. These observations were a cause of great consternation among the critics of counterinsurgency

[256] United States, *Counterinsurgency*, (Washington, D.C.: Headquarters, Department of the Army, 2006),vii

[257] Ibid., ix.

doctrine,[258] and among some conventionally-minded senior officers who were uncomfortable with the high level of uncertainty, risk, and decentralization that this doctrine advocated. This manual was a sharp break from nearly 20 years of formal doctrine and common practice that sought to reduce uncertainty with technology, reduce risk with firepower, and centralize command with digitization, and narrow the conception of the legitimate uses of force.

As a functional driver of change within the army, Petraeus' doctrine had unique power within the structure of both the institutional and deployed army. In late 2006, the Iraq War seemed intractable and as previously discussed some units did not successfully adapt. This framework provided a conceivable path to success in the Iraq War. With an officially approved counterinsurgency manual in existence, the training and equipping functions of the institutional army could no longer simply ignore the war and continue to focus on "Transformation," or any other agenda. Formal doctrine served as a final arbiter of priorities; if there was a question of pre-deployment training priorities for Iraq or Afghanistan, this manual settled the debate. Before Petraeus modified the training

[258] Critics of the population-centric approach to counterinsurgency: Retired army officer and prolific author Ralph Peters was a constant critic, academic Edward Luttwak questioned the feasibility of "soft" counterinsurgency tactics, Air War College professor Jeffrey Record questioned the cultural capability of Western militaries to succeed in counterinsurgency, Stephen Biddle observed that Iraq was more like a civil war in 2006, calling for peacekeeping skills rather than counterinsurgency skills, and army officer Gian Gentile criticized counterinsurgency doctrine as a historically flawed concept that also degraded U.S. military conventional war capabilities. These and many other criticisms of this manual may have validity, an in-depth analysis of the specific theories and different historical case studies that animate this doctrine are beyond the scope of this work. Conrad Crane, "United States," in *Understanding Counterinsurgency Doctrine, Operations, and Challenges,* ed.Thomas Rid and Thomas Keaney (Hoboken: Taylor & Francis, 2010), 68, 72,; Ralph Peters, "Politically Correct War," *New York Post*, October 18, 2006.; Edward Luttwak, "Dead End: Counterinsurgency Warfare as Military Malpractice," *Harper's* magazine (February 2007), 33-42.; Jeffrey Record, "The American Way of War: Cultural Barriers to Insurgency," Cato Policy Institute Analysis 577, (September 1, 2006).; Stephen Biddle, "Seeing Baghdad, Thinking Saigon," *Foreign Affairs* Vol. 85 (March/April 2006), 2-14.; and Gian Gentile, "The Dogmas of War," *Armed Forces Journal International* (November 2007) http://www.afji.com/2007/11/3155836 (accessed March 25, 2012).

scenarios for the major training centers to more accurately reflect the warzones, many units simply fell back on tasks and formal doctrine that they knew best: high-intensity combat. With the release of FM 3-24, there now existed an intellectual framework within which lower level commanders could innovate and adapt even if the doctrine did not prescribe specific tactics for counterinsurgency. In contrast to the prescriptive doctrine system of the post Vietnam era, the counterinsurgency manual was intentionally written to enable a high level of discretion in its execution.[259]

General Petraeus commanded U.S. forces in the most decisive period of the Iraq War. In part he succeeded through publishing the first significant revision of U.S. military doctrine on counterinsurgency in 25 years and positioning himself as the most prominent military counterinsurgency expert in the U.S. By establishing a formal doctrine to support his plan for strategic and tactical change in the Iraq War, General Petraeus strengthened his argument against the philosophy of the army establishment by providing a theoretical framework to make the war a problem that could be solved. Petraeus' "primed" many officers to think more critically about the war through his doctrine. In contrast, General Casey was supported by decades of formal and informal doctrine and common practice, but never addressed the confusion generated among officers over his strategy. This manual provided officers a "safe" way to innovate in the Iraq War.[260] This doctrine provided officers with a powerful argument, since formal

[259] Crane, "United States," 65-68.; and Cloud and Jaffe, 219-220.
General DePuy's doctrine system relied on detailed lists of tasks (the ARTEPs for units and SQTs for individuals) to centralize command and control in combat and ensure adherence to doctrine through prescriptive checklists.

[260] Without this doctrine, it would have been very difficult to argue against FOB consolidation or for higher risk population security tactics in 2004 and 2005. Senior leaders would have been on firm ground from the perspective of formal doctrine since force protection was a core mission task that many units

doctrine is sacrosanct, to challenge more conservative or risk-averse commanders. Petraeus' "radical" doctrine took aim at many of the army's ingrained post Vietnam era beliefs about war and the use of force, and offered a solution that addressed the dissonance experienced by officers through the misalignment of strategy and tactics.

General Jack Keane

> "In the fall of 2006 Jack Keane effectively became the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff."[261]

On September 19, 2006 army General Jack Keane, an influential retired officer, visited Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld at the Pentagon and bluntly informed the Secretary that, "We're edging towards strategic failure" in Iraq. He succinctly outlined to Rumsfeld and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Marine General Peter Pace, the history of failure in Iraq. He stated that the U.S. had lacked a plan for post-war stabilization or grand strategy in 2003 and 2004, and he described the 2004 and 2005 plan as a "short war strategy" for a long war. The transition of security responsibilities to the Iraqi Security Forces and the U.S. command's singular focus on force protection was fueling the violence in Iraq. Keane argued that the strategy no longer matched the reality of the situation in Iraq and was making things worse for U.S. forces and the Iraqi people.

Keane as War Planner

General Keane advocated the immediate adoption of a classic counterinsurgency strategy with population protection as the way to defeat the insurgency, with McMaster's

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trained for extensively and from a common practice point of view as operations in the 1990s were often more about force protection than any other mission.

[261] Ricks, *The Gamble*, 78.

Tal ‘Afar campaign as the model. He criticized Rumsfeld for not holding generals accountable for their failures in the Iraq War. Defeating insurgents required decentralization and General Casey had centralized everything in the Iraq War: command, resources, and personnel, all to keep casualties low. According to journalist Bob Woodward, Rumsfeld was receptive to Keane’s criticism, taking copious notes, and asked Keane to attend a follow up meeting with General Pace.[262]

Three days later General Keane met privately with Chairman of the Joint Chiefs Peter Pace and offered more blunt criticism. When Pace asked Keane to evaluate his performance as chairman, Keane immediately responded with, “I would give you a failing grade.” Pace was reportedly taken aback by such an impolitic response and asked Keane to elaborate. Keane told Pace that he wasn’t proactive; he wasn’t focused or helping in the conduct of the two active wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, the first on life-support and the second rapidly failing. He suggested an immediate secret strategy review at the Pentagon, later called the “Council of Colonels,” to help determine strategy options to reverse the downward spiral of the war. He suggested that Colonel H.R. McMaster lead this council and that General David Petraeus take command of the Iraq War from Casey. Pace agreed to the review and cancelled a trip abroad to begin the Pentagon’s first in-depth review of the Iraq War since 2002.[263]

What was significant about Keane’s criticism was that it came from a respected general who had maintained his credibility and influence, both in and out of the military, despite the reversals of the last few years. Keane was liked by Rumsfeld and turned

[262] Woodward, *The War Within*, 129-135.; and Ricks, *The Gamble*, 78-89.

[263] Woodward, *The War Within*, 142-145.; and Ricks, *The Gamble*, 89-90.

down a promotion from him in 2003. Keane was also unique in that he was still committed to a U.S. victory in Iraq and not averse to shortcutting military and political bureaucracy to achieve his goals. Keane used his influence with the Secretary of Defense to begin a top-down review of Iraq strategy, but he was not content to wait for a thorough bureaucratic review process to run its course.

Through his extensive military connections,[264] Keane began to assemble a coalition of like-minded officers and policy advisors to argue for a shift in Iraq War strategy. In December he met with military historian and policy analyst, Frederick Kagan, at the American Enterprise Institute and evaluated their plan for an increase in troop strength to turn around the war. He reviewed their detailed analysis of available U.S. forces for a surge in Iraq and was satisfied that there was a viable plan at AEI to support his argument for a counterinsurgency strategy. Acting in his assumed role of shadow Chairman of the JCS, Keane had established his own "joint staff" at the AEI think-tank to conduct strategic and manpower staff analysis.[265]

Having offered his blunt strategic guidance to the Pentagon and setting the ponderous wheels of defense bureaucracy in motion and establishing his own nimble staff at AEI, Keane struck at the highest level of political decision-making at a December 11, 2006 meeting with President Bush over the Iraq War. This meeting was attended by several retired military officers, national security experts, and academics. While many of the attendees were pessimistic that any troop increases could salvage the war, Keane was characteristically blunt to the President, "We're in a crisis and time is running out" and

[264] Keane served with Petraeus in the 101st Airborne Division and with General Odierno in the Pentagon.

[265] Woodward, *The War Within*, 276-278.; Cloud and Jaffe, 239.; and Ricks, *The Gamble*, 94-98.

"We don't have a plan to defeat the insurgency." However, unlike many of the other attendees, Keane, backed up by the detailed AEI plan, offered a plausible plan for strategic victory in Iraq. Keane argued that the U.S. needed not just a surge in troop numbers, but a complete change in tactics and strategy. Besides impressing the President, Keane also impressed Vice President Cheney's national security advisor John Hannah, who arranged a private in-depth briefing to the Vice President of Keane's plan.[266]

Keane as War Leader

In 2006 Keane was in frequent contact with his former subordinate General Odierno to ensurer that his surge plan was a workable strategy for the Iraq War. He was also heavily involved in making sure that generals like Casey, Schoomaker, and Pace did not undermine the new war plan. Odierno relayed to Keane that he thought the AEI plan was workable, but stated that "My problem's Casey," Odierno's immediate commander in Iraq. Keane found out through his contacts in the Pentagon's operations staff (J3) that Casey, with Chairman Pace's concurrence, was planning a compromise surge plan called "2 plus 2."[267] Keane viewed this sequential option as an attempt by Casey to undermine the entire surge plan with which Casey fundamentally disagreed. Keane voiced his concerns with both the National Security Advisor and the Vice President, that Casey and Pace's plan did not meet the President's intent for a decisive action to turn the war around. Briefed by the Vice President on Keane's criticisms, the President overruled

[266] Woodward , *The War Within*, 277, 280-281.; and Ricks, *The Gamble*, 99-101.

[267] Rather than being a decisive and concentrated effort as Keane had counseled in his five brigade surge plan, the "2 plus 2" plan recommended committing two army brigade combat teams and two marine battalions piecemeal, one unit at a time, rather than all at once.

Pace's "2 plus 2" recommendations in favor of the five army brigade and 2 marine battalion plan.[268]

Once Keane helped establish a permissive political environment for the changes that Petraeus and Odierno were about to carry out, he continued to act in the manner of a George Marshall war leader by traveling to Iraq frequently throughout 2007 and 2008 to ensure that the military effort for success in Iraq was unified at the strategic and tactical level. In March of 2007 Keane established a back-channel line of communication, unfiltered by the Central Command or Defense bureaucracy, between the President and Petraeus through the Vice President.[269] This led to an unprecedented statement of support for Petraeus delivered to Keane personally by the President in September 2007. The President relayed that, "I waited over three years for a successful strategy. And I'm not going to give up on it prematurely. I am not reducing [troop levels] further unless you are convinced we should reduce further."[270]

From late 2006 until 2008 Keane enabled a major change in the army as an organization and a dramatic reversal of fortune in the Iraq War. Keane had the moral authority, both within the military and with the Bush Administration, to challenge Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld and the institutional army's resistance to investing in the war. Despite the many setbacks of the Iraq War, Rumsfeld, Casey, Abizaid, and the

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[268] Woodward, *The War Within*, 296-298.

[269] Stymied in their attempts to limit Keane's influence the Joint chiefs blocked Keane from traveling to Iraq in October of 2007. Now serving as army Chief of Staff, George Casey had confronted Keane in June with the charge that he was "unaccountable" for his advice to the President and Chairman of the JCS Mullen accused Keane of "diminishing" the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Upon learning of this the President ordered the Secretary of Defense to allow Keane to continue to travel to Iraq. Woodward, *The War Within*, 401.; and Ricks, *The Gamble*, 253.

[270] Bush, *Decision Points*, 385.; and Woodward, *The War Within*, 331-332, 359.

service chiefs were all still committed to the Transition strategy well into late 2006. Keane challenged this orthodoxy within the defense establishment and provided the President the opportunity to overrule his military advisors based upon a legitimate, alternative military plan.

In contrast to the Joint Chiefs of Staff, who seemed remote from the conduct of two active wars in anything other than in a "force generation" role, General Keene acted as the senior military advisor to the President as General Maxwell Taylor and General George C. Marshall had in earlier generations. By providing senior political leaders with a viable "theory of victory" Keane set the groundwork for a permissible political environment to achieve a shift in strategy and a significant change in army operations. Keane addressed a clear dysfunction in the national approach to the Iraq War and was able to conduct strategic planning, provide expert military advice, select combatant commanders, and unify political and military strategy at the national level, all as a private citizen.

General Raymond Odierno[271]

"Odierno is extremely good at using the force to execute what Petraeus wants to do. It's a beautiful thing to watch" [272]

Rejecting the Transition Strategy

In December of 2006, Lieutenant General Odierno took command of Multinational Corps-Iraq (MNC-I) and received "The Bridging Strategy"[273] briefing from his commander, General Casey. In light of the failures of the 2006 attempts to rein in violence in Baghdad in Operation Together Forward I and II, these orders were a tacit admission of the failure of the U.S. mission in Iraq. "The Bridging Strategy" was effectively a U.S. withdrawal to the periphery of Iraq while Iraqi Security Forces fought the insurgency in the cities and villages.[274] General Odierno immediately began to reconsider this plan. He concluded that the U.S. needed to move back into the cities and establish Combat Outposts, that the transition to ISF control of security must be slowed,

[271] General Ray Odierno is one of the most interesting of the three members of the organizational insurgents in that he made the most significant metamorphosis from a "heavy-handed" and "indiscriminate" division commander in 2004 to a flexible a sophisticated corps commander in 2007. In journalist Thomas Ricks' portrayal in *Fiasco*, General Odierno is a negative example of a successful counterinsurgent. As the commanding general of the 4th Infantry Division in Tikrit in 2004, Odierno is compared unfavorably to the more sophisticated and politically savvy Major General David Petraeus in Mosul commanding the 101st Airborne Division. Petraeus served as the model of effectiveness and Odierno was portrayed as the standard high-firepower American officer. Ricks, *Fiasco*, 142-144, 170-171 and *The Gamble*, 108.

[272] A senior U.S. military intelligence officer, Baghdad 2007. Ricks, *The Gamble*, 132.

[273] The Bridging Strategy was the last version of the Transition strategy. It included the following key points 1. all U.S. forces must move out of large cities, 2. all forces must consolidate on large FOBs along major routes and in Iraqi border regions, 3. transition of security responsibilities to ISF must be accelerated, 4. U.S. forces will control border access while ISF fights in the cities, and, 5. security must be restored by ISF because sectarian violence prevents national reconciliation.

[274] Ricks, *The Gamble*, 111, 345-349.

and that more U.S. troops were needed. At Keane's urging, Odierno began to advocate for a large surge of U.S. forces in Iraq, but General Casey disagreed with Odierno.[275]

General Odierno was the only military officer in the entire chain of command arguing for a surge and a new approach in Iraq. In the presence of Generals Casey and Abizaid, during a visit to Baghdad by Secretary of Defense Gates, General Odierno emphatically disagreed with his superiors' assessment of the viability of a surge. Both General Casey at MNF-I, and General Abizaid at CENTCOM, backed by the Joint Chiefs of Staff, were opposed to any escalation. In the midst of this power struggle in Baghdad and Washington, General Odierno ordered his staff to begin detailed planning to employ five surge brigades in Iraq despite how unlikely it seemed that these troops would ever arrive.

Odierno developed a nuanced understanding of the varying elements of the Iraq War and rejected the simplistic understanding of the insurgency as implied by the widespread use of terms like "Anti-Iraqi Forces"[276] to describe the insurgency. His command defined the problem of Iraq as, "a struggle between different communities for

[275] This was all of the manpower Casey needed for his plan to "stiffen" ISF units in the cities with more American embedded advisors at joint outposts with the Iraqis. It is important to note that these nascent Joint Security Stations were outposts designed to facilitate the transition of U.S. forces to the borders on too even bigger FOBs and not intended as commitments to population security as they were later in 2007 and 2008.

[276] Terms like "Anti-Iraqi Forces" and "Anti-Coalition Forces" were used to define the insurgency from 2004 until 2007. These terms became a metaphor for the lack of deep U.S. understanding of the multiple insurgencies and their disparate motivations. The term was explicitly abandoned by General Odierno in 2007 because it confused more than it clarified. The use of the term AIF implied that: 1. there was a unitary insurgency, or that more accurately the U.S. simply did not understand the elements of the insurgency 2. that insurgents were somehow against Iraq, even though many were motivated by their own understanding of Iraqi nationalism, 3. denied the existence of sectarian conflict and 4. the U.S. was the judge of who was and was not a "good" Iraqi. Ricks, *The Gamble*,353; and United Kingdom, House of Commons. Iraq Inquiry Commission. *Testimony of Emma Sky, 14 January 2011*. http://www.iraqinquiry.org.uk/media/52057/Sky-2011-01-14-S1-declassified.pdf (accessed October 24 2011), 41-42.

power and resources…not simply an insurgency…" The Iraqi government and security forces were identified as partisans in this conflict and not as neutral actors.[277] The conclusions reached by General Odierno in late 2006 were nothing less than the reversal of the entire Casey Transition strategy and all of the assumptions that it was built upon; specifically, that the U.S. was driving the insurgency and that the Iraqi Security Forces were the only ones who could stop the violence. The gulf was immense between General Casey's orders to Odierno in late 2006 and the plan that General Odierno gave to incoming commander General Petraeus in February 2007. General Odierno's "Security Now" briefing to Petraeus outlined a campaign plan for arresting sectarian violence and restoring the security situation throughout Iraq. [278]

Conventional Campaign Planning

Operationalizing the new counterinsurgency doctrine for the conditions in Iraq was Odierno's most significant contribution to the efforts of the Keane and Petraeus to change the army approach in Iraq. Odierno adapted conventional combat methods to the needs of the comprehensive counterinsurgency strategy established by General Petraeus. He filled the technical gaps in the *Counterinsurgency* manual and made military power support strategic political goals. Critics charged that counterinsurgency doctrine

[277] Specific "drivers of instability" in Iraq were identified as: AQI/Sunni insurgents, Shia extremists, Kurdish expansionism, Shia on Shia violence, external (Iranian) subversion, criminals, and the weak central government. Sky, "Iraq 2007- Moving Beyond Counter-Insurgency Doctrine," 30. Odierno, "The Surge One Year Later," 3.; and Ricks, *The Gamble*, 119

[278] Key tasks from Security Now briefing: 1. Secure the population where they lived with priority on Baghdad; 2."Interdict accelerants of Baghdad sectarian violence"; 3. Neutralize AQI car bomb network; 4. Balance targeting against both Sunni and Shia extremists; 5. Control national borders and counter Iranian influence; 6. Improve capability of Iraqi Security Forces; 7. Transition to Iraqi self-reliance; 8. Focus on economic development. Ricks, *The Gamble*, 345-349, 351-376.

attempted to remove combat from the essence of war;[279] however, General Odierno's surge campaign was remarkably conventional, from a military standpoint, and relied on significant combat for success.[280] Despite the fact that generals Sanchez and Casey were both conventional warfighters in outlook and training, Petraeus and Odierno were the first commanders to initiate a corps-level offensive in history of the Iraq War.[281]

This offensive was built on a fundamental understanding of the security situation and the strategies of the two most prominent insurgent groups, the Sunni Al Qaeda in Iraq[282] and the Shia Jaysh al-Mahdi.[283] The first phase of Odierno's offensive was the

[279] See various articles by Colonel Gian Gentile.

[280] For the significant use of firepower in combat by the 3ID to secure the "Belts" south of Baghdad see Dale Andrade, *Surging South of Baghdad: The 3D Infantry Division and Task Force Marne in Iraq, 2007-2008*, (Washington, D.C.: Center of Military History, 2010).

[281] The offensives undertaken in 2004-2006 had been local affairs that withdrew combat forces from one area to focus on another; a practice that many officers characterized as a game of "whack-a-mole." One of Odierno's first suggestions to General Petraeus was that he balance securing Baghdad itself and the "Belts" that surrounded it. Petraeus agreed and Odierno eventually deployed roughly equal numbers of Surge units to the city and the belts, even creating a new division level command, Multinational Division Central to handle the belts south of Baghdad. Ricks, *The Gamble*, 165.; and Andrade.

[282] Targeting AQI: As the smaller and more aggressive combatants, AQI received the bulk of the overt attention from the U.S. campaign. It was viewed as an irreconcilable element of the insurgency that sought and created instability and violence for its own sake. AQI had initiated and sustained the sectarian civil war as a method to force Iraqi Sunnis to support it and undermine the Shia-dominated government and the U.S. occupation. Operation Phantom Thunder pushed significant U.S. and Iraqi military forces into the belts around Baghdad to clear AQI fighters and reestablish permanent U.S. and Iraqi government control of these mostly Sunni communities. Catherine Dale, "Operation Iraqi Freedom: Strategies, Approaches, Results, and Issues for Congress," (Washington, D.C., Congressional Research Service: 2008), 85.; and Kagan, 17.

[283] Targeting JAM: The U.S. campaign also targeted Jaysh al-Mahdi, albeit in a more indirect manner. Previous military assaults on Muqtada al-Sadr's Jaysh al-Mahdi in Najaf, Karbala, and Sadr City resulted in stalemates that had simultaneously raised Sadr's profile as a freedom fighter and mobilized many sympathetic Shia to his cause. Under the Baghdad Security Plan U.S. security efforts in local areas and barriers and checkpoints helped fracture and isolate the different Jaysh al-Mahdi elements in the city. U.S. forces also began targeting what was described as "Special Groups" or "criminal" JAM leadership, or the most violent of the movement. Odierno did not directly challenge Sadr or reenter Sadr City, preferring instead to pursue a political reconciliation approach, but maintained pressure on his movement's leadership, fracturing its unity, and cutting its supplies from Iran under both the Baghdad Security Plan and Operation Phantom Thunder. Dale, 84.; Kagan,16; and Cockburn, 187-198.

Baghdad Security Plan, or Fardh al-Qanoon.[284] Under this plan an Iraqi Baghdad Operations Center was established under Lieutenant General Abud Qanbar to command all Iraqi Army, National Police, and Iraqi Police in the city. It also included a renewed partnering and mentoring effort between U.S. surge forces and the Iraqi Security Forces. Rather than only relying on embedded training teams, U.S. tactical units at all levels directly "partnered" with an Iraqi counterpart in their areas of operation. Additional U.S. surge forces and Iraqi forces were committed to securing Baghdad neighborhoods in newly established small outposts and Joint Security Stations. Population control measures, like barriers between neighborhoods and fixed Iraqi checkpoints, helped decrease sectarian violence and freeze ethnic cleansing. U.S. special operations forces and conventional forces, with Iraqi government acquiescence, began targeting Shia extremists as aggressively as they did Sunni extremists.[285]

The second phase of the offensive began with Operation Phantom Thunder initiated in June of 2007 to retake the Baghdad Belts and prevent "accelerants"[286] from entering Baghdad. This phase of the campaign was based on a clear understanding of the strategies of both AQI and Jaysh al-Mahdi and how U.S. forces could best defeat them. Securing Baghdad and the Belts was followed by another unprecedented first in the Iraq War, a sustained pursuit of insurgents displaced by a successful security operation. Operations Phantom Strike and Phantom Phoenix focused on pursuing retreating Al Qaeda fighters through the Diyala River Valley, into Ninewah province, and finally to

[284] Enforcing/Imposing the Law in Arabic.

[285] Sky, "Iraq 2007 – Moving Beyond Counter-Insurgency Doctrine," 30-31.; and Kagan, 115-117.

[286] Explosives, weapons, and fighters.

Mosul throughout 2007 and 2008.[287] This constant pressure on the worst of the Sunni insurgency, allowed Odierno to consolidate many of his conventional campaign gains by enabling local level political accommodations and the extension of the Sons of Iraq program throughout Iraq. Unlike previous clearance operations, significant U.S. forces remained with Iraqi Security Forces to hold and secure population centers.[288]

By providing a workable, tactical interpretation of the Petraues counterinsurgency doctrine, Odierno was able to "prove" its efficacy in the domain that mattered most in the army: combat. Just as the October War of 1973 and the 1991 Gulf War validated U.S. high-intensity war doctrine; Odierno's surge campaign validated the counterinsurgency theories of General Petraeus. It was even more convincing to many officers that General Odierno, a conventional officer with a reputation as a hard-nosed division commander in 2004, was able to operationalize a "conventional" counterinsurgency campaign. An unconventional counterinsurgency campaign was made recognizable to many officers by its use of conventional war terminology, such as offense, defeat, and pursuit. Odierno drew on conventional military methods and integrated them into an operational strategy that emphasized unconventional counterinsurgency methods that were all aligned with Petraues' new intellectual framework for the Iraq War.

F. Convergence

Simple lower level unit innovation does not adequately explain why the army changed during the Iraq War. Nor do the arguments that changes were imposed from

[287] Dale, 80-88.; and Kagan, 197.

[288] Kagan, 197-198.

senior levels of the organization or dictated by the strategic environment offer a comprehensive explanation of this change. As we have seen in the varying tactical experiences in the war, adaptation was not uniformly experienced or evenly distributed throughout Iraq.[289] Additionally, the strategic shift of Petraeus, Keane, and Odierno was fairly radical compared to the established culture and doctrine of the army, and would have been difficult to impose on an unwilling officer corps. Critical to offering a comprehensive explanation of this change dynamic is an understanding of the convergence of widespread critiques of the existing operational strategy from the rank-and-file and the articulation of an alternative strategy from a coalition of senior leaders.

The Casey Transition strategy, based on the establishment post Vietnam narrative, failed to cope with the situation in Iraq. This failure, combined with the dissonance experienced among young officer veterans of the Iraq War, and the appearance of the coalition of Petraeus, Keane, and Odierno armed with a plausible alternative strategy, overturned the Casey strategy and fractured the post-Vietnam consensus within the army. If a critical mass of rank-and-file officers had not been primed for change, first, by the failure of Casey to address the contradictions in his strategy, and second, by the appearance of discourse on alternatives, then it would have been unlikely that Petraeus and associates could have simply imposed their concepts on the army.[290]

[289] The example of Colonel Steele demonstrates how a unit could regress from successful innovation in 2003 to counterproductive behaviors in 2006 and not simply "accumulate" learning in a virtuous cycle of innovation. If one man, Steele, could derail an entire brigade's worth of learning and experience, then organizational learning is not a complete explanation of change. The clear geographical divide between successful innovation on the periphery of the war, McMaster in the remote Tal Afar and MacFarland in the "lost" city of Ramadi, and the non-progressive adaptation that occurred in Baghdad, demonstrates that there was uneven distribution of the opportunities for innovation. There seems to be a correlation between distance from MNF-I headquarters in Baghdad and the opportunity/flexibility to innovate.

Conversely, if the coalition of reformers had not articulated a comprehensive alternative to the establishment narrative, it is equally unlikely that that a virtuous cycle of tactical innovation would have resulted in a strategic shift in the U.S. approach to the war. Despite the attractiveness of a narrative of grassroots innovation overcoming organizational dogma, this was simply not the case in the Iraq War. Casey rejected the tactical model provided by McMaster in Tal 'Afar and resisted the local level accommodations achieved by MacFarland in Ramadi until his last day in command in 2007. While Casey did not revert to Vietnam-style prescribed tactics as General Westmoreland had, Casey used the more indirect, but effective, method of controlling the tactics of the Iraq War by appealing to the traditional army dislike of ambiguous small wars and by utilizing structural controls available to him as the senior commander.[291]

The coalition of Petraeus, Keane, and Odierno did not simply impose a new strategy on the army in Iraq from on high. They offered a new intellectual framework for the entire war. This new framework, while running counter to much of recent army intellectual tradition, directly addressed the dissonance experienced by rank-and-file officers. In contrast to the Casey strategy, this framework enabled tactical discretion and opportunistically adopted innovations developed at lower levels. Petraeus established the

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[290] Innovations such as McMaster and MacFarland's campaigns, among others, offered tactical alternatives that were not examined or replicated in a comprehensive manner by Casey. By ignoring these alternatives that were narrowly successful tactically and not even attempting to turn them into strategic successes, Casey appeared disconnected from reality and rigid to many officers.

[291] These controls consisted of the FOB consolidation directive that prioritized force protection over security and made it functionally difficult for units to engage in population security. Secondly, he took advantage of army unit and leader rotations to diminish the impact of troublesome innovations like McMaster's Tal Afar campaign. Finally, Casey controlled the metrics of success used to validate his Transition strategy and thus controlled what counted as progress. Casey measured success in sectors transferred to the Iraqi Security Forces regardless of their capabilities or the state of the objective security situation. This allowed him to report progress both to Washington and to his command and to continually drawdown and forecast withdrawal from Iraq well into late 2006.

framing argument for this new strategic conception through the power of formal doctrine in FM 3-24, *Counterinsurgency*. Keane challenged the entrenched civilian and military orthodoxy in Washington and enabled the adoption of a new national strategic direction in the war. Finally, Odierno used conventional methods in an unconventional operational strategy that successfully turned the Petraeus doctrine into reality. This framework was based on a new conception of the war predicated on redefined military victory and not simply on getting out of Iraq.

CHAPTER V

THE AMBIGUITY OF CHANGE

> "Fool!" cried the hunchback. "You fell victim to one of the classic blunders. The most famous is 'Never get involved in a land war in Asia,' but only slightly less well known is this: Never go in against a Sicilian when death is on the line."[292]

A. Developments Subsequent to the Surge

Will the changes of 2007 translate into the overthrow of the dominant post Vietnam narrative in the army? Events subsequent to the surge in the Iraq War have presented a complex and ambiguous picture of organizational change. The end of the U.S. presence in Iraq, the ongoing developments in the war in Afghanistan, the global financial crisis of 2008, and the shift in Obama Administration national security priorities have all convoluted lessons from the Iraq War that may have appeared as self-evident in 2008.[293] The U.S. Army has moved into an era of debate over the lessons of Iraq that mirrors many of the conditions of the immediate post Vietnam era.

At the end of the Vietnam War, President Nixon shifted U.S. foreign policy focus from the Kennedy and Johnson Administrations' focus on countering communist insurgencies in the developing world back to countering the Soviet Union in Europe.

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[292] RTK [pseud.], comment on "What are the top 5 things we've learned from OIF," The Small Wars Journal Council forum, comment posted November 18, 2007, http://council.smallwarsjournal.com/showthread.php?t=4327 (accessed April 30, 2012). RTK quoting an exchange between actors Wallace Shawn and Cary Elwes in the 1987 film, *The Princess Bride*, in response to Dr. Steven Metz's previous post that the lesson of the Iraq War was, "Never get involved in a land war in Asia."

[293] The general dynamic of organizational change as outlined in previous chapters in both the post Vietnam and Iraq War eras still has merit. Even in an uncertain security environment, a permissive external political context, an intellectual framework to guide action, and operational examples to validate that framework are all still necessary for the establishment of a dominant organizational narrative.

Similarly, President Obama has shifted U.S. national security focus from the Bush Administration's interventions in the Middle East to countering the influence of a rising China in the Asia-Pacific region.[294] Just as the Nixon Administration rejected the use of large-scale U.S. interventions in the developing world, so too has President Obama rejected the scale, cost, and purpose of the U.S. efforts in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Mirroring the role of Colonel Harry Summers in challenging the counterinsurgency lessons of Vietnam, Colonel Gian Gentile has emerged as the most prominent army traditionalist rejecting the counterinsurgency lessons of Iraq.[295] While he has not authored a single volume as influential as Summers' *On Strategy*, Gentile has

[294] In January of 2012, President Obama released a new defense strategy designed to rebalance the capabilities of the U.S. military and refocus strategic priorities on the Asia-Pacific region. Within this document, Secretary of Defense Panetta argues that in an era of economic austerity and emergent threats that the U.S. military needed to be, "smaller and leaner," an, "agile, flexible, ready, and technologically advanced" force. The President identifies the areas for priority military investment as intelligence, counterterrorism, counter-proliferation, countering access denial, and cyber-security. This document does not completely reject the experience of the Iraq and Afghanistan Wars, but the rebalancing of capabilities, and the "pivot" to Asia, makes it clear that large-scale stability operations are no longer a priority or a capability of the U.S. military. U.S. Department of Defense, Sustaining U.S. Leadership: Priorities for 21st Century Defense, (Washington, D.C: January 2012) http://www.defense.gov/news/Defense_Strategic_Guidance.pdf (accessed April 22, 2012).

The focus of this new strategy was influenced by a new military concept advocated by the navy and the air force called Air-Sea Battle. The name Air-Sea Battle, is inspired by the 1980s AirLand Battle doctrine of the U.S. Army, with significant U.S.A.F. support, designed to defeat the Soviet Army in Europe. Instead of an alliance between the army and the air force to dominate strategic thought in the 1980s, this concept is an alliance between the air force and the navy. Significantly, these are also the services least committed, particularly the air force, to Iraq and Afghanistan. Norton Schwarz and Jonathan Greenert, "Air-Sea Battle Promoting Stability in an Era of Uncertainty, *American Interest* February 20, 2012, http://www.the-american-interest.com/article.cfm?piece=1212 *(*accessed February 27, 2012).

Air-Sea Battle is designed to integrate the strategic force projection capabilities of the navy and air force to counter a rising China's ability to deny U.S. forces access to the Western Pacific. While not mentioned by name, this concept is woven throughout the new defense strategy. With the largest budget cuts and force reductions, the army has been viewed as the biggest loser in this "rebalancing." Furthermore, the army does not have a significant role in the Asia-Pacific. Robert Farley, "U.S. Army Must Define Role in a Future with no Enemies," *World Politics Review* special report, Military Doctrine After the Long War, November 2011, http://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/articles/10509/special-report-u-s-military-doctrine-after-the-long-war (accessed May 1, 2012), 58.

[295] For a counter-argument to the COIN rejectionist school of Gentile see, Douglas A. Ollivant and Radha Iyengar, "The Next War" *Foreign Policy* May 3, 2012, http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2012/05/03/the_next_war (accessed May 3, 2012).

been a prolific critic, in print and in military weblogs, of the received wisdom of General Petraeus' counterinsurgency theory. Gentile has led a conservative resurgence in defense of the assumptions of the post Vietnam narrative from its low ebb of 2007. Again echoing the immediate post Vietnam era, this argument has found renewed vigor based on the simple exhaustion of the rank-and-file officer corps from the long engagements in Iraq and Afghanistan and the apparent ambiguous outcomes of both wars.[296]

However, there are significant differences between the post Vietnam and post Iraq eras that indicate that history may not simply repeat itself. Unlike the 1976 repudiation of small wars in General DePuy's capstone formal doctrine, many of the tenets of General Petraeus' counterinsurgency theory have been institutionalized within the army's most important doctrinal publication, Field Manual 3-0, *Operations.* In the 2008 edition, the first post September 11, 2001 update of capstone army doctrine, stability operations were given direct parity with traditional combat operations.[297] This development was clearly influenced by the 2006 publication of FM 3-24, *Counterinsurgency*. To have

[296] With the long term stability of the Iraqi state in question and the failure of the U.S. to secure national reconciliation, the Iraq War provides a questionable validation of the intellectual framework of the Petraeus doctrine. If measured by the more modest goals of 2007, the surge was successful, but when compared to the ambitious goals of the invasion, not to mention the overall cost of the war effort, Iraq is not a perfect model for emulation. Similarly, the lack of decisive results in the War in Afghanistan has tarnished the reputations of counterinsurgency advocates. Without the specific conditions of Iraq in late 2006, Afghanistan proved a poor target for the surge model. Paul Yingling criticized senior military leaders in 2009 for acting as if the previous eight years of the conflict had not occurred. Alternatively, Bob Woodward portrayed Generals Petraeus and McChrystal as well as Admiral Mullen of rigidly applying the Iraq counterinsurgency formula to the Afghanistan War in 2009. Bob Woodward, *Obama's Wars*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2010). Paul Yingling, "An Absence of Strategic Thinking: On the Multitude of Lessons Not Learned in Afghanistan," *Foreign Affairs* (December 16, 2011), http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/136882/paul-l-yingling/an-absence-of-strategic-thinking?page=show (accessed May 1, 2012). ; and Ned Parker, "The Iraq We Left Behind: Welcome to the World's Next Failed State," *Foreign Affairs* 91, no. 2 (March/April 2012), http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/137103/ned-parker/the-iraq-we-left-behind (accessed May 1, 2012).

[297] The guiding principle of army "full-spectrum operations" is a rubric called "offense-defense-stability" (ODS). However, in the 2001 edition of FM 3-0, the traditional combat operations of offense and defense were clearly prioritized over the more nebulous, stability operations. Kem, 49.

irregular stability operations elevated to actual equality with traditional combat operations is a first in the history of formal doctrine in the army and indicates the institutionalization of at least part of Petraeus' doctrine within the structure of the army.[298]

Secondly, unlike the immediate post Vietnam era, conservative generals have not dominated the senior positions of the institutional army in the wake of the surge.[299] With the passing of General Petraeus from the military scene, it has fallen to General Odierno, as the final active member of the surge coalition of senior officers, to institutionalize the developments of the army over the last ten years of war.[300] As Chief of Staff of the Army, he has adopted a hybrid approach to mediate the demands of national strategy and the lessons of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. He has defined the post Iraq and

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[298] Kretchik, 261-262.

[299] Establishment generals like Odierno's predecessor as Chief of Staff, General Casey, have been largely discredited within the army because of the Iraq War (General Martin Dempsey succeeded Casey for less than a year before being elevated to the Chairmanship of the Joint Chiefs of Staff).

[300] The fate of many of the most prominent innovators in the Iraq War is also an indication of the long term impacts of the changes of 2007. General Keane is no longer influential in Washington because of his close association with the Bush Administration. General Petraeus commanded Central Command and then the Afghan War effort directly during the indecisive surge era and subsequently retired from the army to become the Director of the CIA. Petraeus as a retired officer is no longer involved in the operational army and as the CIA Director is now in charge of the shadow drone and proxy counter-terror campaign that he viewed as a limited capability while in uniform. General Odierno has ascended to the highest position in the institutional army as the Chief of Staff. As Chief of Staff, Odierno has significant influence on the institutional army, but lacks a position in the operational chain of command. Colonel Paul Yingling was assigned to an academic post in Germany and decided to retire from the service in 2011 over disillusionment with senior political and military leaders. MacFarland was promoted to major general and serves on the ISAF HQ in Afghanistan. McMaster is now a brigadier general and recently left command of an anti-corruption task force in Afghanistan to command the infantry and armor center at Fort Benning. While both officers have achieved general officer rank, neither has served in the all-important division command billet, which is widely viewed as a prerequisite to the highest levels of army leadership. Paula Broadwell, *All In: The Education of General David Petraeus* (New York: The Penguin Press, 2012).; Woodward, *Obama's Wars*.; General Officer Management Office "Active Duty General Officer Resumes," U.S. Army, https://www.gomo. army.mil/ [username and password required] (accessed May 1, 20120.; and Paul Yingling, "Why an Army Colonel is Retiring Early –To Become a high School Teacher," Opinion, *Washington Post*, December 2, 2011 http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/why-an-army-colonel-is-retiring-early--to-become-a-high-school-teacher/2011/12/02/gIQAB2wAMO_story.html (accessed May 1, 2012).

Afghanistan mission of the army as "Prevent, Shape, Win." Prevention is a return to conventional deterrence of potential adversaries in the mode of the Cold War Active Defense and AirLand Battle doctrines. This role is predicated on the army maintaining a credible capability to, "fight and win across the full spectrum of conflict." The "Shape" role refers to the development of capabilities of allied militaries through training and partnering missions to keep enemies contained. This role was intentionally removed from the army repertoire after the Vietnam War and until the Iraq War only Special Forces concerned themselves with "Foreign Internal Defense."[301] The final role of "Win" is the traditional army mission of conventional, high-intensity combat. This combination of Cold War deterrence, foreign military training skills developed in Iraq and Afghanistan, and traditional state-on-state war is perhaps an attempt by Odierno to steer a middle course through the demands of the President's new defense strategy, the experience of young Iraq and Afghanistan War veterans, and the concerns of conservative army traditionalists.[302]

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[301] Foreign Internal Defense is a blanket term for mainly Special Forces advisory and counter-insurgent/guerilla/narcotics/etc missions in foreign countries. The sheer scale of the training mission in Iraq overwhelmed Special Forces' capabilities requiring conventional officers to engage in large-scale advisory missions. Also, Foreign Internal Defense largely focused on training tactical unit infantry and irregular forces and had no special utility in training an Iraqi armored division or logistics distribution networks.

[302] General Raymond T. Odierno, "Prevent, Shape, Win," The Small Wars Journal Blog, entry posted December 12, 2011 http://smallwarsjournal.com/blog/prevent-shape-win (accessed May 1, 2012). Significantly, General Odierno has announced an unprecedented initiative to align the expeditionary functions of the conventional army with the training, advisory and combat operations of Special Operations Command. Within this initiative, Odierno has suggested that army general purpose troops may be deployed to Security Force Assistance and combat operations under the operational command of Special Forces. This would be a revolutionary change in the regular army culture that has often viewed special operations forces with suspicion. This may be yet another indication of Odierno's attempts to institutionalize some of the lessons of the Iraq and Afghan Wars for the future. Thom Shanker, "Army Will Reshape Training, With Lessons from Special Forces," *New York Times* May 2, 2012 http://www.nytimes.com/2012/05/03/us/politics/odierno-seeks-to-reshape-training-and-deployment-for-soldiers.html?hp (accessed May 3, 2012).; and Raymond T. Odierno, "The U.S. Army in a Time of Transition: Building a Flexible Force," *Foreign Affairs* May/June 2012

Furthermore, as revealed by Colonel Paul Yingling's indictment of the general officer corps in *A Failure in Generalship*, the rank-and-file officer corps has not blamed politicians or the general public for the failures of the Iraq War as was the case after Vietnam, but has directed its criticism at the performance of the army's governing class of generals. This final factor may be the most significant of the differences between the post Vietnam and Iraq eras. Unlike the lessons drawn from Vietnam by officers such as Colin Powell, that were directed externally, many officers have focused their attention internally. The long-term stability of the Iraqi state, the endgame in Afghanistan, and budget battles in Washington, D.C. will all shape the debate over the lessons learned and the narrative of the post Iraq War era; however, without, clearer alignment among the external political environment, the service philosophy, and its interpretation of the past, a new or modified dominant narrative may not emerge for some time.

It should not be surprising that the post Vietnam narrative has been difficult to overturn, as it has been institutionalized over a period of thirty years and appeals to deep historical traditions in army culture. While this narrative is powerful, it is clearly open to reinterpretation by the current generation of officers forged in the Iraq and Afghanistan wars. Perhaps not since World War II has a generation of rank-and-file officers had such a significant amount of combat experience relative to the general officer corps. Unlike the post Vietnam War era where many senior generals like Westmoreland, Abrams, and DePuy all had served in World War II, the current generation of senior officers does not have an alternate set of experiences distinct from that of junior officers to validate its

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http://m.foreignaffairs.com/articles/137432/raymond-t-odierno/the-us–army-in-a-time-of-transition (accessed May 3, 2012).

philosophy of war.[303] The lack of an alternate source of experience forces senior officers to base arguments about the future of the army upon their own experiences in Iraq and Afghanistan. Since junior officers share many of these experiences, and as Yingling demonstrated these officers are no longer timid about questioning generals, these arguments are open to contestation.

The current generation of junior and mid-level officers and their interpretations of their experience will be critical in determining the future of the army. Will they subscribe to the arguments of the post Vietnam narrative as Colin Powell did and reject the Iraq and Afghan Wars? Or is it possible that these officers, stripped of their illusions about their senior leaders,[304] will choose their own independent path? Regardless of how the dominant narrative in the post Iraq era develops, the interpretation of the past and its understood lessons will play a central role in the future of the culture of the U.S. Army.

B. Long-Term Institutional Change

Finally, it is misleading to say that the army is a learning organization. Tactical adaptation and longer term "learning" are more accurately conducted by individuals rather than in some abstract organizational collective. Individuals interpret history, understand their reality, and plan for the future based upon their own experiences,

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[303] General DePuy was able to validate his doctrine based upon his earlier combat experience in Western Europe in 1944 and 1945. Current generals do not have such a powerful experience independent of younger officers. The bulk of current general officers entered in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Their experiences in the Gulf War or the peacekeeping missions of the 1990s are not of sufficient scale or gravity to provide functional alternatives to junior officer experiences in Iraq and Afghanistan. In the current era authoritative references to Operation Desert Storm as a model of war are likely to be less than persuasive with many Iraq and Afghanistan veterans.

[304] The failure of establishment generals to deal with the challenges in Iraq in 2003-2007 and the failure of senior counterinsurgency advocates in 2009 to successfully apply their model to Afghanistan have served to undermine the moral authority of senior officers as a class to rank-and-file officers. Woodward, *Obama's Wars*.; and Yingling, "An Absence of Strategic Thinking."

education, and personality. Organizational philosophies emerge from shared narrative interpretations of past events and provide a common frame of reference for the organization to plan and address challenges. These philosophies are far from static; even the most dominant and powerful of narratives is undergoing revision based on developments in the external political and security environments and reinterpretations over time by members of the organization.

However, the army is more than simply a transitory collection of individuals with each succeeding generation of officers starting with an organizational blank slate. Continuity is achieved through formal and informal structures, such as written doctrine, common practice, and traditions. Powerful individuals within the institution, such as generals like DePuy or Petraeus, embed their interpretations of experience and history within the structure of the organization through formal doctrines. Watershed doctrines like the 1976 Active Defense or the 2006 *Counterinsurgency*, inform the army's official philosophy of war.[305] Acceptance and internalization of this philosophy of war by a critical mass of rank-and-file officers leads to a dominant cultural narrative forming within the organization. Reinterpretation of this narrative in light of subsequent events, like a war, can lead to the narrative being reaffirmed or called into question. It is significant to remember that the post Vietnam narrative was not simply ordered into existence by General DePuy. Rank-and-file officers, like then Colonel Colin Powell, accepted the argument of DePuy's narrative and institutionalized it within the army during their careers, especially after "proving" its validity in the Gulf War. This interactive dynamic serves a critical role in the stability and coherence of a military

[305] The combination of common understandings of organizational purpose, legitimate combat methods, and legitimate types of wars to be fought.

organization, allowing members to make sense of a complex environment and guide their actions amid uncertainty. It is when cultural narratives calcify into unquestioned and reactionary orthodoxy that they become counter-productive, and in combat, dangerous.

For the intellectual vitality and flexibility of a military institution to endure, its philosophy of war and cultural narrative must be constantly reexamined, questioned, and changed. As the examples of the post Vietnam era and the Iraq War surge clearly demonstrate, change is neither achieved through the imposition of a strategy from above nor by tactical level innovation from below. Thus, organizational change can be best understood as a long-term, ambiguous, and fundamentally interactive undertaking. Even when major tactical changes are dramatically adopted during crises, these changes can be undermined or rolled-back by subsequent developments. Deeply ingrained cultural preferences and organizational philosophies take time and constant reinterpretation to truly change. External developments are critical to reaffirming or undermining this change, but a long term shift in an organizational culture requires a fundamental internal reinterpretation of the dominant narrative.

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